

November 23, 2007

**Response from the Ontario Council of University Libraries on the
“Canadian Digital Information Strategy”**

The Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) is a leader amongst academic libraries in the development of permanent access to digital collections. Consequently, it is with interest that OCUL monitors the digital information activities of other organizations and institutions. OCUL Directors unanimously endorse the following response to the Canadian Digital Information Strategy draft.

Comments:

Strategic approaches

OCUL supports a collaborative approach over a coordinated approach to develop and implement a Canadian Digital Information Strategy. It is noted that there are many leaders in our country that bring valuable expertise and resources to the table. They serve a variety of constituents, each with special priorities. Examples include:

- Government – legal deposit and records management mandates
- Research – open access mandate, tri-council research priorities
- Public libraries – supporting the informed citizen
- Archives – preserving our heritage
- Academic institutions – research intensive collection mandates, Canadian Research Knowledge Network achievements

Such groupings indicate the regional approach suggested in CDIS does not take full advantage of existing partnerships.

Priorities

As implied in the document, priorities will need to be established for a successful program. Proponents of mass digitization acknowledge not everything can nor should be digitized. Some of our most vulnerable materials are the born digital and thus are a time-sensitive priority. Government and NGO’s need well established guidelines for their records management. Canadian publications being produced in electronic format need to be incorporated into enduring digital collection infrastructures being developed throughout Canada.

Trustworthy repositories

In the document it notes that projects are needed to capture the creative imagination. However it is very important to develop projects that capture public trust in digital preservation through the creation and certification of Trusted Digital Repositories (TDR). This will require a reorganization of institutes that collect, store, organize and preserve Canadian heritage. To successfully establish a TDR, organizations need to designate

base budgets towards the long term sustainability of their digital collections and dedicate full time staff with expertise to the ongoing management and development of TDR's.

Building on strengths

There are several important organizations which have demonstrated the ability to be strong partners in the CDIS but are not referenced as such in the document. Projects such as the Lois Hole Library Legacy Program in Alberta have tremendous potential to play a key role in CDIS. OCUL has one of the largest digital repositories of research materials in the world – Scholars Portal. The document does note AlouetteCanada which already has a plan underway to guide the digitization of print materials in the collections of museums, libraries and archives across Canada. It also has a well established portal system based on open source (non proprietary) software. With such a large task ahead, it is essential that any Canadian strategy take full advantage of existing successes underway to ensure limited funds and, more importantly, human resources are used wisely.

Recognizing Canadian champions

The selective bibliography has several serious omissions when comparing the Canadian digital landscape to other countries. While several important Canadian initiatives are described in the body of the document, they do not appear in the bibliography. AlouetteCanada and canadiana.org, which are well regarded in Canada, need to be referenced. Scholars Portal is recognized around the world but was not included. The Alberta Library is a fine example of collaborative work. The Canadian Research Knowledge Network transformed the academic research community giving researchers in Canada a competitive edge. Similarly, Erudit and the Synergies project are gathering momentum and charting a path for scholarly publications that can be used as best practices for other countries. These Canadian initiatives, recognized nationally and internationally, need to be included in the CDIS documentation.

Canadian strategies and resources

A section which lists Canadian information digital projects should be added to the bibliography. Below are some proposed entries.

Alberta Library is a wide multi-type library consortium that facilitates cooperative activities among Alberta's libraries

www.thealbertalibrary.ab

AlouetteCanada is an open Digitization Initiative that strives to create, disseminate, preserve and sustain the knowledge base of Canadian memory organizations in digital form, for the purpose of benefiting all Canadians

www.alouettecanada/ca

canadiana.org, a nonprofit organization, focuses on preserving and providing access to early Canadian publications, first on microfiche and now online.

www.canadiana.org

Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN) is a partnership of Canadian universities, dedicated to expanding digital content for the academic research enterprise in Canada.

www.researchknowledge.ca

Erudit, an innovative means of promoting and disseminating the results of university research

www.erudit.org

Scholars Portal provides long term access to digital resources collected by the Ontario Council of University Libraries.

<http://www.scholarsportal.info/spot-news/>

Copyright reform

To be successful, the CDIS strategy will need to be complemented by copyright reform, notably in the treatment of orphan works, crown copyright and the right in prescribed circumstances to circumvent technological measures (TM) for non-infringing purposes. For there to be a balanced copyright regime, there need to be changes to legislation and an education component. In this context:

OCUL recommends that Action item 3.4.1 be re-worded as follows

3.4.1. Foster public understanding of:

- copyright
- fair dealing (in the light of the Supreme Court decision in the case of *CCH Canadian Ltd. v. Law Society of Upper Canada*);
- the critical importance of a robust public domain; and
- the variety of licensing models available in the information marketplace.

OCUL strongly recommends that Action Item 3.4.5 be deleted. The points raised are fully dealt with under Action item 3.4.1 (“Foster public understanding of ...the variety of licensing models available in the information marketplace”). Furthermore, the use of the term “promote” in 3.4.5 when the other action items are prefaced by “foster,” “develop” and “contribute” is inappropriate.

Broadening the imagination

A variety of digital collection examples will enhance the understanding of the scope of materials that are being addressed in the CDIS. In addition to the photographs from the archives of LAC, the document should include such items as snapshots of the stars whose astronomy data are downloaded daily, government document websites that were captured for future researchers, statistical data analysis made possible by archiving numerical data, and samples of born digital research journals making Canadian knowledge accessible to the world.

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