CRKN's Digitization, Hosting, and Preservation Services:
Current State and Future Directions

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Project Scope & Objectives

- We were asked to examine CRKN's digital curation services, by which we mean its digitization, hosting, and preservation services.

- This project included a market assessment and an external review of these services, as well as an examination of potential service models for their future development.

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Methodology

- Conduct desk research on digitization, hosting, and preservation needs and solutions offered by vendors and cultural heritage organizations.

- Conduct interviews with 20 individuals representing members, clients, and committee members to explore potential demand and understand service trends, gaps, and opportunities for digitization, hosting, and preservation.

- Review findings of various reports from CRKN, Canadiana, and other Canadian initiatives about digitization, hosting, and preservation needs and challenges.

- Review CRKN's curation services financial documents and other information gathered by CRKN about their digital curation services.

Interview Statistics

- **20 interviews conducted**
  - 17 clients/members
  - 3 committee members

- **13 different institutions and organizations** included during interviews
  - Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ)
  - Canadian Canoe Museum
  - Concordia University
  - Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL)
  - Laval University
  - Library of Parliament
  - McGill University
  - Toronto Public Library (TPL)
  - University of Alberta
  - University of Guelph
  - University of Toronto
  - University of Victoria
  - Vancouver Island University

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High Level Overview of Key Takeaways

Key Takeaways

1. **CRKN's digital curation services are not well positioned in the marketplace** due to their weak value proposition relative to alternative options, especially for digitization and hosting. They face **competition from other prominent community options** such as Internet Archive and HathiTrust.

Key Takeaways

2. **There is not a multi-year business plan for the digital curation services** that sets target revenue, expenses, etc. to support, communication, benchmarking, and assessment. A very low proportion of costs are covered by earned income, raising questions about whether a "customer" model is really right.

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Key Takeaways

3. The services have accumulated **significant "technical debt,"** including usability, accessibility, and interoperability, and further investment needs to be carefully planned taking into consideration demand and alternative options.

Key Takeaways

4. **Marketing, branding, and communication efforts** are insufficient to keep the community well-informed, and opportunities to secure participation in order **to support community controlled services** have not been maximized following the merger.

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Key Takeaways

5. There is **trust in CRKN as a mission-driven organization** and stakeholders are interested in seeing CRKN provide **national leadership.**

Three Broad Directions Forward

Building Blocks

- Based on the landscape review, market analysis, and an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of CRKN and potential external trends, we identified a range of service models that can be used as **building blocks** based on the CRKN's strategic business directions.

- We created separate building blocks for digitization, hosting, and preservation, which can be assembled in a variety of ways.

- Broadly, these building blocks fall into three categories: fee for service, public good, and exit strategy.

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FEE FOR SERVICE: Provide fee-based digital curation services whose revenues are intended to cover the expenses associated with the maintenance and development of the program areas. To be viable, CRKN must either specialize or focus on a specific content type, or seek to fill a known gap in the market.

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PUBLIC GOOD: Provide mission-driven leadership/services without charging any fees in order to act as national champion to better serve Canada and help ensure knowledge is accessible and equitable to all and staying true to CRKN's mission. To be viable, CRKN must secure a sustainable form of funding to support this work.

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EXIT STRATEGY: Sunset an existing service, either by transitioning to another provider or ceasing them outright, potentially through some kind of transition period.

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Thank you