



Canadian Research
Knowledge Network

Réseau canadien
de documentation
pour la recherche

CFI Innovation Fund – CRKN Project Vision

Project Summary

Building on the academy-owned Canadiana collections and platform, CRKN aims to develop a world-class infrastructure for researchers in Canada and around the world that enables transformational research and discovery of cultural and heritage content. The platform will bring together content from the Canadiana collections, which includes over 60 million pages of digitized documentary heritage, as well as content from libraries, museums, archives, and other heritage repositories across the country. Much of the critical content housed in local organizations and archives is of immeasurable value to researchers; however, it is inaccessible as many local institutions lack the resources to maintain advanced platforms and systems. This project aims to sustainably unveil this hidden content and fully integrate it into the research ecosystem while also allowing institutions and local archivists to prioritize digitization according to their research goals. Recognizing the value of centralized preservation, as well as localized access and hosting, some content will be stored on CRKN servers centrally, while some will be stored locally. Despite the location of the digital files, all content will be accessed through a state-of-the-art discovery platform that includes open-source tools and a shared metadata model.

The project will be structured to include content beyond text and images. The platform will enable the discovery and analysis of digital objects, video, audio, maps, and other born-digital scientific artefacts with the goal of fostering new research capacity. Enhancing this vast array of content relating to Canada will be innovative research tools that deliver cultural heritage resources in a machine-readable format, through APIs and Linked Open Data. In addition, the project will build user-facing tools for content curation, annotation, and augmentation, making the platform a rich, interconnected hub of research data. The platform will also enable enhanced discovery and opportunities to showcase special collections at local institutions through a shared, standards-compliant platform for discovering digital content.

Through the development of this infrastructure that further enables discoveries and insights in the humanities and social sciences (HSS), this project will build capacity for Canada's researchers and the knowledge workers. This build-once and re-use often approach will ensure that Canada's universities are not duplicating efforts in tools and service development, while also recognizing the unique value of custom and localized tools and approaches when appropriate.

This project will be committed to the Truth and Reconciliation commitments made at member institutions and on behalf of the academic library community and will also be firmly grounded in the goals and values of equity, diversity, and inclusion. There are many gaps in the heritage and archival collections across the country as historical collection development focused on dominant cultures. The ways in which some archival content has been described and arranged contains terms and views that are not appropriate today. Through state-of-the-art, community-adopted, and supported metadata enhancements and tools, this infrastructure will be intentionally built with inclusion at the forefront. It will also aim to increase content by and about marginalized and Indigenous communities, on their terms and under their guidance. Furthermore, this project envisions the opportunity for content to be annotated and updated by the very experts that know it best, as well as through lived experience. This ensures that as new discoveries occur, and the ways in which we describe and contextualize Canada's history evolves, the metadata is updated. The heritage platform that will support tomorrow's researchers is not stagnant; rather, it grows and evolves as fields like the digital humanities continue to provide critical insights to connections of our past and present.

In addition to ensuring state-of-the-art, researcher-driven access to the content, through this funding, CRKN will enhance its preservation infrastructure, providing preservation of heritage and archival content to member universities and other Canadian galleries, libraries, archives, and museums. This scales preservation at a national level, ensuring that the corpus of Canada's heritage and archival content is preserved for future generations. This also ensures that the preservation of this critical research material is not left to commercial or non-Canadian entities who aim to profit from our heritage.

This project builds on past CFI and institutional investments through CRKN. In fact, it furthers the vision for CRKN as described in its last CFI funded project, *Digital Content Infrastructure for the Human & Social Sciences*, whose goals, as described below, are evermore relevant to this next iteration of CRKN's infrastructure:

This project will build on past CFI and institutional investments in national digital content infrastructure, create new capacity for multi- and interdisciplinary research fueled by human and social sciences knowledge, and ultimately contribute to improving the lives of Canadians.

Furthermore, the project will capitalize on the demonstrated success of CRKN, leverage the collective experience that has been built since the inception of CNSLP, establish new expertise in the preservation and delivery of humanities and social science content, and enrich CRKN through new linkages with research communities and organizations. The expanded digital content infrastructure will provide seamless and equitable access to global knowledge for researchers at participating universities, and reduce research barriers caused by existing institutional, regional and disciplinary disparities. The digital content infrastructure will also be a catalyst for the development of new methods of inquiry, new networked approaches, and new interactive structures for conducting research and creating knowledge.

Borrowing once again from that successful proposal and transformational CFI investment, the goal of this project is *nothing less than to accelerate Canadian research and innovation objectives at a system-wide level.*

Outcomes / Benefits

- Integrate academic libraries into new types of direct involvement in the research and learning processes within and across disciplines.
- Advance shared goals to meet the new and emerging needs of research in a digital era.
- Enable the digital transformation and the digital discovery of cultural heritage collections.
- Enhance the research potential of Canada's HSS output.
- Build capacity for digital transformation.
- Improve interoperability and enrich data.
- Leverage past investments by building on an existing TDR and avoiding the cost of replicating the TDR development.
- Connect and expand the TDR with other academy-driven innovations underway.
- Increase the profile of Canadian-based research and resources internally.
- Ensure CRKN's longstanding goal of leveling the playing field for member institutions so that researchers across Canada will have access to heritage content despite institutional, local, or regional disparities.