INKE
IMPLEMENTING NEW KNOWLEDGE ENVIRONMENTS
inkeproject@uvic.ca | inke.ca | 1.250.472.5401

Steps to Success in Ensuring DRI Engages and Mobilizes Humanities and Social Science Research

Submitted by Ray Siemens and Alyssa Arbuckle on behalf of the INKE Partnership
siemens@uvic.ca | alyssaa@uvic.ca
https://inke.ca/

Current Issues

We submit this response on behalf of the Implementing New Knowledge Environments (INKE) Partnership, a partnership that brings together researchers, librarians, and stakeholders from research, industry, and academic organizations to make publicly engaged, open, digital scholarship in Canada both viable and usable. Ultimately, we foster open social scholarship: academic practice that enables the creation, dissemination, and engagement of open research by specialists and non-specialists in accessible and scalable ways. We strengthen open scholarly communication among Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) researchers, organizations, and the public through our development a nascent, online network / platform called the Canadian HSS Commons. Our partnership has additional mandates through our Open Scholarship Training, Public Digital Scholarship Prototypes and Initiatives, and Open Scholarship Policy Observatory programs, but we will turn here specifically to the needs of our academic and industry partners in the realm of DRI: our central engagement with Canadian DRI is through our development of the Canadian HSS Commons.

The Canadian HSS Commons builds on conversations and consultations over the last several years with INKE partners, particularly in consultation with one of our partners, the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, which represents all HSS researchers in Canada, and coordinates the largest HSS conference in Canada, The Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences (~5000-9000 participants per year,

https://www.ideas-idees.ca/). The Canadian HSS Commons will serve the Federation's constituents and will be available for all HSS researchers in Canada. The Canadian HSS Commons is a bilingual environment for researchers to share, access, re-purpose, and develop scholarly projects, publications, educational resources, data, and tools. This commons includes a subject repository for open access publications that assigns digital object identifiers (DOIs) upon upload and follows FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interactive, Reusable) guidelines for research data management; a project development environment that can integrate with Google Drive, Dropbox, or Github; individual user profiles, with federated login/identity authorization, including with ORCID; blogging capabilities; subject interest groups; and member interactions (e.g., profile building, messaging). The Canadian HSS Commons offers an alternative to problematic commercial repositories like academia.edu or ResearchGate; it also positions the work of partnered groups such as the US-based Humanities Commons in the Canadian legal sphere. Currently, this national network is in development with CANARIE, Compute Canada, and the University of Victoria (beta site at https://hsscommons.ca).

We know that HSS tools—including Voyant (developed by Stéfan Sinclair, Geoffrey Rockwell, and others); the Canadian Research Writing Collaboratory (CWRC, developed by Susan Brown and a larger team); and even our nascent Canadian Humanities and Social Sciences Commons—are the most accessed of all those housed by Compute Canada. We are keen to build on the sheer impact and reach, by the numbers, of HSS computing: the Canadian HSS Commons is another example of the sort of collaboration, research, and dissemination portal development that NDRIO might support as part of its remit to serve the DRI needs of traditionally underserved disciplines. Built on the open source software HUBzero, the Canadian HSS Commons uses many familiar open source packages—the Linux operating system, an Apache web server, a MySQL database, PHP web scripting, and the Joomla content management system. The INKE partners are committed to using these reliable and

stable systems and packages. Many HSS researchers across Canada use boutique tools and platforms for their needs which can be difficult to maintain or sustain due to their lack of ongoing federal infrastructural support for constant access and availability that web app users expect. The Canadian HSS Commons provides a central location for HSS researchers in Canada, but its codebase is also available open source via Github for anyone else to reuse. **While this infrastructure is not computationally heavy, as Compute Canada's most-used researcher developed platforms Voyant and CWRC along with the HSS Commons prove, its potential impact on disciplines in traditionally underserved in the DRI ecosystem is huge**.

Future DRI State

Community-engaged, open, digital scholarship is critical for maximizing public access to and engagement with the Canadian research community. In the current context of global upheaval, the need to apply HSS research and methodologies in order to overcome pressing challenges becomes especially salient. In this context, largescale, digitally-mediated networks of open research collaboration and communication are proving to be more important than ever. The INKE Partnership and its Canadian HSS Commons are currently well integrated into Canadian digital infrastructure. There are, however, national, local, and institutional challenges that our partnership recognizes, not least of all the areas of development for digital research infrastructure that both serves the various constituents of our partnership (researchers, administrators, librarians, information specialists, et cetera) *and* is also public-facing.

How to Bridge the Gap

There is a need for infrastructure that is specifically designed for collaboration and software development, as well as the capacity to engage those with the expertise to facilitate this work, not just for the HSS Commons but for all Humanities, Social Science, and Information Science researchers and their DRI projects in Canada. That

said, as an example, in many ways the Canadian HSS Commons represents an opportunity to maximize DRI impact. By numbers alone, the direct involvement of key stakeholders in our work ensures that our Partnership impacts 90,000+ Canadians in the HSS research community (as estimated by our partner, the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences).

This large, diverse community represents a significant group of users who will directly benefit from an open, online network at the scale of the Canadian HSS Commons, and will expect both 24/7 access and potential support. This is currently unavailable in the Canadian DRI ecosystem, and is sure to be a hindrance when the network moves from beta to alpha. Without appropriate support for this national scale HSS network, users will default to other, better-supported systems like the commercial academia.edu or ResearchGate, and to development using platforms like Amazon Web Services—regardless of the ethical positions and business models of these companies, and their reliance on US rather than Canadian digital infrastructure. Partly in response to the ethical, security, and sustainability shortcomings of these platforms and services, the HSS Commons team has engaged in deliberate initial development in partnership with Compute Canada and CANARIE.

We welcome the formation of NDRIO, with its mandate to serve all Canadian researchers. A wholistic approach to DRI development and deployment will bridge the gap between the current DRI state in Canada (which, has been historically rooted in and around the need of a few specific disciplines), and NDRIO's mandate to develop a researcher-centric, service-oriented, sustainable DRI ecosystem in Canada. We are keen to see this vision realised, not just for the sake of public Humanities and Social Science research in Canada, but to communicate to government and other stakeholders the reach and value of continued and sustained DRI funding in Canada.

Needs Summary

- Digital research infrastructure that has broad impact on Humanities and Social Sciences by taking advantage of the fact that some of the most-used platforms currently hosted are from HSS, and providing the constant access and uptime and systems administration support that these types of services require.

MAIL:
Mearns Centre / McPherson Library, PO Box 1800 STN CSC
Victoria BC, V8W 3H5, Canada

COURIER:
Mearns Centre / McPherson Library, 3800 Finnerty Road
3rd Floor, Room A314, Victoria BC, V8P 5C2, Canada