THE DATA MATTER.

CRDCN QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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CRDCN
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Looking back and looking ahead

What's the matter with data and why the data matter?

Our final issue of *The Data Matter* for 2022 is one of reflection. As we head into the holiday season, we look back at the year that was and prepare for all that 2023 will bring. If you have not yet heard, earlier this year our Executive Director Martin Taylor announced his retirement and the CRDCN has just recently announced who will be taking his place in April of 2023!

In this issue, we will touch upon our recent funding announcement and the impact it will have on the bright future of the CRDCN.

We will also look back at our recent Data Forum event, and how the keynote panel discussion ties into the future of the Network and the coming virtual Research Data Centre (vRDC) platform.

Lastly, we wanted to focus on the role of Academic Director, as we have welcomed a number of new colleagues to this position, as your data and career champions, over the course of the year.

We at the CRDCN wish you a very happy and safe holiday season. Thank you for reading!

Ryan Murphy
Editor, *The Data Matter*

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The CRDCN celebrates renewed and increased funding for 2023-29

As the CRDCN moves into 2023, there is much to celebrate and look forward to, including the launch of our virtual Research Data Centre (vRDC) platform, providing enhanced access to microdata for researchers across Canada and remote access for the first time ever, as well as greatly increasing computational capacity to support advanced research in the social and health sciences.

These major advances in our research, training, and knowledge mobilization programs wouldn't be possible without the continued support of our funding partners, including the Canada Foundation for Innova-

November 16 by the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Canada's Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry at the Canadian Science Policy Conference in Ottawa.

Earlier that morning, CRDCN hosted a panel discussion with the President of CIHR, Michael Strong, the AVP of Research at SSHRC, Tim Wilson, the Vice-President of Research at our host McMaster University, Karen Mossman, as well as leaders from Statistics Canada, members of our CRDCN Board, and local partner university leaders and researchers.

Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry. Photo credit: CSPC

tion (CFI), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

Over the next six years, these three federal agencies are investing $34.8 million in the CRDCN. This funding not only supports the vRDC, but highlights the importance of CRDCN's role in enabling over 2100 researchers and students nationwide to access Statistics Canada microdata to conduct innovative research, in training the next generation of researchers in a wide range of social science and health disciplines, and in informing key areas of public policy.

This latest funding was formally announced on

Michael Strong emphasized the critical role that data plays in understanding the socio-economic, geographic and policy implications of health decisions and outcomes. He pointed in particular to the interconnectedness of health and economic issues that have arisen from the pandemic, which have been tackled by data scientists and policy-makers working together using Statistics Canada data accessed through CRDCN's network of RDCs across the country.

CRDCN Executive Director Martin Taylor had spoken earlier with Anil Arora, Chief Statistician of Canada, about the importance of this funding to support the expansion of data access in Canada. These sentiments

Image, from left: Johanne Provençal (CRDCN Director of Research), Janet Halliwell (CRDCN Board Chair), Tim Wilson (SSHRC AVP), Martin Taylor (CRDCN Executive Director), Michael Strong (CIHR President), Andy Bjerring (CRDCN BOARD) and Leïla Boussaïd (Statistics Canada Director-General). Photo credit: Rob Faubert, CIHR

were echoed by Leïla Boussaïd, Statistics Canada Director-General for Data Access and Dissemination, who noted that the partnership with the CRDCN strengthens Statistics Canada's relationship with its stakeholders and enhances engagement with diverse groups and communities. She specifically referenced new social, health, and environmental microdata that are in the pipeline that will significantly expand the scope of future research and the capacity to focus on key policy questions of social inequities and inequalities in Canada.

The renewed and increased continued support for the CRDCN will not only increase its contribution and impact in Canada; it will also position the Network as a leading digital research platform in the social and health sciences internationally.

Some examples of our researchers' groundbreaking work include:

- CRDCN's COVID-19 rapid-response research teams that informed pandemic policy decisions in health care, education and the labour market;

- the significant body of work on food insecurity and poverty that provided the research foundation for the replacement of the Canada Child Tax Benefit;

- and a study on the impacts of treaties on outcomes for Indigenous Peoples (and the first in Canada), and the first to apply statistical methods to understand the determinants of treaty-making.

The CRDCN central staff would like to thank all Network researchers who complete the annual research survey, which provides us with key indicators on the ways in which data access is used to address societal issues through in-depth statistical analysis and through collaborations with policy-makers, health providers, and the scientific community at large.

We look forward to continuing to facilitate vital research and partnerships over the coming years and to training the next generation of researchers who seek to improve the lives of Canadians.

What you need to know

- Three federal agencies (CFI, SSHRC and CIHR) are investing a total $34.8 million in CRDCN over the next six years.
- This funding is crucial to the modernisation of the RDCs in terms of speed and broader access.
- This continued and enhanced support helps to advance interdisciplinary research and training in the quantitative social and health sciences.

Your data and career champions on campus

Serving a crucial role within our Network, the Academic Directors (ADs) are the leaders at the Research Data Centres (RDCs) found on the grounds of our 33 partner institutions.

But aside from being the leader of the RDC, have you wondered what the role of an AD is and why it is so important to the Network as a whole?

What are the ADs responsibilities?

All told, our ADs have four core responsibilities in their role:

- Ensure sound local governance and administration of the RDC
- Act as the primary liaison with CRDCN Central Staff, Statistics Canada, McMaster University, and the research administration at their university and the wider research community
- Facilitate and coordinate relationships among researchers at the RDC
- Partcipate as a member of CRDCN's Academic Council

Of course, the first two core responsibilities are absolutely crucial and are required to ensure the RDCs remain viable, operational and, most importantly, accessible parts of the Network. Without the day-to-day governance and administration work, as well as the fostering of relationships between all our Network stakeholders, the RDCs would not survive and thrive, and not be able to offer access to key microdata for researchers.

The fourth core responsibility is also key, as it helps set in motion what we at the CRDCN do to help serve our research Network and its stakeholders. The Academic Council provides insight on our research, training and knowledge mobilization endeavours, as well as helps us to find ways to broaden our impact and reach as a Network.

However, it's the third core responsibility that perhaps gets overlooked and is so very important to

building and sustaining our Network. After all, it is the researchers we serve and strive to help, so it is a privilege to have champions on the ground at the campus level, building and maintaining relationships with researchers at their university, helping to propel important work forwards within the RDCs and helping researchers network to provide career and learning opportunities.

It's this research community that has also led to the onboarding of some of our ADs. For example, both the University of Toronto's Daniel Silver and Carleton University's Frances Woolley were tapped for the role of AD after having been active users of their local RDC.

"Our founding Academic Director, Jennifer Stewart, took up an administrative position at Carleton, and she asked me to step in," says Woolley. "I was happy to do so as I was just starting to use the RDC more actively, and so the role was a good fit for more interest and experience."

Frances Woolley

The role of Academic Director is also performed in addition to someone's regular and often hefty workload at their university. However, the multiple roles can often be complementary.

"I am very interested in expanding the scope and access to social sciences data in general," says Silver. "At the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus (UTSC) Sociology department, we recently started a certificate in computational social science. I am associated with the Urban Data Centre at the School of Cities. And of course, my research uses RDC data."

Woolley echoes that sentiment, saying, "It's very com-

plementary to my research interests, as I have a couple of projects using RDC data at the moment. I also like the fact that it gives me an opportunity to connect with colleagues in other units, and mentor graduate students."

The role comes with its challenges and benefits, both Woolley and Silver agree, with challenges including explaining succinctly what datasets are available in the RDC, navigating the different institutions and dealing with older equipment.

"The Carleton University RDC (CU-RDC) is one of the youngest RDCs in the network, so we're still in the building phase - setting up our governance structure, creating a community of users, and so on. It's exciting to be part of this - but it can be a challenge too," says Woolley. "And that's the downside of this role - worrying about the future of the CU-RDC if we're not able to build and maintain a strong user base, especially when many universities are in an increasingly challenging fiscal environment. Fortunately, the Carleton university administration, especially the University Librarian, has been very supportive of the CU-RDC."

Some of these challenges may be alleviated in the coming years, as the virtual Research Data Centre (vRDC) is rolled out, improving the computing and processing capacity for researchers. The benefits, says Silver, include working with talented and dedicated colleagues and seeing the dividends in the production of high-quality research. This benefit will only grow

with increased access to microdata.

"It is a rewarding and exciting position, on both ends: on one side, supporting faculty colleagues in their research; on the other, being part of a national network advancing the entire endeavour of social science," says Silver.

Daniel Silver

Changing of the guard

Our dedicated group of Academic Directors experienced change in 2022, with some changing of the guards.

We at the CRDCN would like to thank those outgoing ADs for their hard work, support as champions of our Network at their institutions:
- Caroline Hyslop (University of Ottawa)
- Mark Asberg (Queen's University)
- Lisa Dillon (Université de Montréal)
- Catherine Haeck (Université du Québec à Montréal)
- Jane Friesen (Simon Fraser University)

We are equally thankful to be welcoming a number of incoming ADs, who we're sure will serve admirably in their role of leading the RDC at their university. Joining us recently has been:
- Chris Ferrall (Queen's University)
- Stéphane Moulin (Université de Montréal)
- Andrei Munteanu (Université du Québec à Montréal)
- Simon Woodcock (Simon Fraser University)
- Donald Moses (new RDC at the University of PEI)

What you need to know

- Academic Directors act as leaders of the RDCs on campuses across the country.
- The ADs act as career and data champions for researchers throughout the network, facilitating, maintaining and building the connections needed to keep important research happening.
- The CRDCN welcomed several new ADs to the role this year and expresses sincere gratitude to the departing directors for their hard work and commitment.

Data Forum lessons on data sovereignty, datasets, and the future of CRDCN

As we approach the end of 2022 and reflect on the past year, certainly one of the highlights for CRDCN staff and stakeholders was our annual autumn event.

Always looking to innovate in the range of programming it offers, CRDCN opted to make this year's event a forum of full day discussions and presentations about datasets, linkages, and issues related to data sovereignty, democratization and bias.

Aaron Franks, Senior Advisor at the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC), began the day with a wonderfully informative presentation about the sovereignty of First Nations data and a look at the history of the First Nations principles of ownership, control, access, and possession, known as OCAP®, established some 25 years ago. CRDCN has worked with FNIGC to promote OCAP® training and we believe in its importance, so it was a very fitting and important way to begin our day.

Our second session, featuring CRDCN Executive Director Martin Taylor and Leïla Boussaïd, Director General of Data Access and Dissemination - Strategic Engagement Field at Statistics Canada, discussed the future of datasets and access. They shared exciting news about the pipeline of administrative, linked and survey data on its way. This accelerating flow of new data was set against the promising backdrop of CRDCN's announcement of $34.8 million in federal funding secured for the same period (2023-2029) and the soon-to-be-deployed virtual Research Data Centre (vRDC).

These significant developments provided the frame and focus for our keynote session with data experts from the US, UK and Canada who spoke about issues that will be front and centre with the launch of the vRDC. In a wide-ranging and all-too-short conversation, Deborah Yates, a KPMG data governance lead from the UK, Jeanne Holm, the Deputy Mayor of Los Angeles and former evangelist for open data at the White House, and Tracie Afifi, a tier 1 Canada Research Chair and award-winning CRDCN RDC user, explored how best to navigate providing greater access to data for public good while respecting privacy and confidentiality.

As became apparent in the exchange moderated by Michelle Gauthier, CRDCN's Special Advisor, reconciling the expectations of researchers, data providers, policy-

Aaron Franks

Jeanne Holm

Michelle Gauthier

makers, and the public is an essential, yet by no means easy, feat. Nonetheless, as Michelle explains: "As CRDCN pursues its transition to a hybrid mode of in-person and remote access and its goal of providing access to a greater number of researchers from a wider range of disciplines, communities, and institutions, benchmarking the Network's performance against other comparable organizations internally and learning from the experience of other countries will be all the more critical." Watch the full session on the CRDCN YouTube channel.

Of course, a key pillar of the CRDCN is knowledge

mobilization, and with that in mind our other sessions tackled key dataset linkages related to social data, health data and the Census, as well as deeper dives into the Longitudinal and International Survey of Adults, business data and the issue of minimizing bias through the eyes of the Statistics Canada Questionnaire Design Resource Centre.

All of these sessions are available in full, with automated captions in multiple languages, on our YouTube Channel.

If you have any questions regarding the sessions, please contact us at info@crdcn.ca.

What you need to know

- CRDCN has posted all sessions from its recent Data Forum event on its YouTube channel.
- Aaron Franks from FNIGC began the event with a very important session about data sovereignty and the OCAP® principles.
- The keynote session about data democratization and stewardship was particularly prescient given our recent funding announcement and the coming vRDC launch.

If you have any feedback or ideas for future articles or themes, please reach out to us at info@crdcn.ca.