THE DATA MATTER

CRDCN QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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CRDCN
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Partnerships with people and data

As the first quarter of 2023 comes to a close, the team here at Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN) prepares for a major change with the retirement of our long-time Executive Director Martin Taylor and the arrival of our new Executive Director, Dr. Natalie Harrower.

In crafting this issue, we wanted to focus on the idea of partnerships. It's a concept that is dear to us at CRDCN, working within the research, academic and policy ecosystems, as we craft, develop and nurture working relationships with colleagues and organizations.

Developing and fostering partnerships has always been a noticeable skill of Martin's leadership capabilities. With that in mind, we asked some of our valued board members, supporters and colleagues to offer reflections on Martin's leadership and partnership skills as he prepares to take his well-deserved and well-earned retirement.

We know that these tenets will continue on through Natalie, as well as through all of us here on the CRDCN Central Staff, as it has been built into our way of operating here at the network by Martin, throughout the years.

This issue of the Data Matter will also focus on our ongoing and newly formed webinar and training partnerships with organizations and journals, such as Statistics Canada and the *Canadian Journal of Economics*. These partnerships provide key information, learning opportunities and training potential for researchers, students and policy colleagues.

Lastly, we look at the Research-Policy Snapshots, crafted and published every six months by CRDCN and our network researchers, with the goal of bringing together research and policy in an easily digestible way.

Thank you to Martin for all you've done for us as a team and for the CRDCN as an organization, and a very big welcome to Natalie, with whom we look forward to working and accomplishing many goals in 2023 and beyond.

Enjoy this issue and thank you for reading.

Ryan Murphy
Editor, *The Data Matter*

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

Reflecting on the leadership of Dr. Martin Taylor

At the end of this month, we at the Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN) will be wishing our leader and Executive Director, Martin Taylor, a very happy and well-earned retirement.

Martin joined the CRDCN in 2016. He came to the Network having already earned the respect and friendship of many colleagues across the country given the many roles he had held previously in Canada's research ecosystem. His rich and varied experience, together with his exceptional leadership skills and his ability to craft partnerships, two of Martin's strong suits, were exactly what the Network needed to propel CRDCN further during his tenure, secure record funding for the Network and position CRDCN for future growth.

With these ideas in mind, we reached out to Martin's colleagues and friends to ask them to reflect on his leadership, partnership skills and how they've informed both their relationship and a relationship with the CRDCN.

"I first knew Martin in the mid-1990s, when he was Acting Vice-President (VP) Research at McMaster. Two decades later the CRDCN was searching for a new Executive Director when I heard that Martin had recently returned to the Hamilton area. I hesitated for fifteen seconds before asking him whether he might be interested in the position," says Byron G. Spencer, Professor Emeritus of Economics at McMaster University. "We had no idea then of how transformational his leadership would be: he created an outstanding Board of Directors, identified major new sources of funding and new partnerships, greatly enhanced the relationship with Statistics Canada, and oversaw a large expansion in both the number of researchers and the sites for data access. Seven years on, the CRDCN is a leader at the international level in the provision of social and health data for research and policy analysis. Much of the credit is due to Martin."

Indeed, the Board of Directors that Martin helped create is a formidable one and has served the organization very well, with representation from academic,

public, nonprofit and private sectors. Andrew Bjerring served as Chair of the Board until this year when he passed the torch to incoming Chair Janet Halliwell.

"I've had the great pleasure of working closely with Martin for 15 years, first at Ocean Networks Canada (ONC) and more recently at CRDCN," says Bjerring. "Both organizations are Major Science Initiatives, national in scope and international in impact. Both have significant user communities, numerous stakeholders and partners, and require a leader who can establish and maintain relationships based on trust, confidence, personal respect and the ability to create and communicate a shared vision. In short, a perfect match for Martin's attributes as a person and as an organizational leader. Internally, these same attributes played a critical role in Martin's relationship with the respective boards, allowing them to fulfill their duties to provide, as Martin always put it, due diligence and wise counsel. Speaking personally and as chair of both ONC and CRDCN, working with Martin has been one of the highlights of my career."

"Having worked with Martin for over 20 years, from his role on SSHRC Council to his leadership of ONC, I have witnessed the effective deployment of a diplomatic and inclusive leadership style built on relationships and strategic partnerships that he nurtures carefully," says Halliwell. "That leadership style is not driven by personal ego, but rather a deep personal interest in how he may best contribute to evolving the health of the research ecosystem."

As a Major Science Initiative, CRDCN is funded in large part by federal investment from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

"When I think of Martin's contribution to CRDCN, what first comes to my mind is his deftness in handling the complexity. The CRDCN is a partnership of 42 universities who in turn partner with Statistics Canada,

Dr. Martin Taylor seen here during the announcement event for the latest federal funding renewal. Photo: Rob Faubert/CIHR

SSHRC, CIHR and CFI," says Michael Veall, Professor of Economics at McMaster University and Principal Investigator for CRDCN. "Each partner has its own needs. Just to maintain these relationships would have been a wonderful achievement but Martin has managed to enhance them and add new ones. I am grateful that Martin has devoted his superpowers for our collective benefit, and I wish him the best in his future adventures."

Roseann O'Reilly Runte, President and CEO of CFI, speaks to Martin's leadership qualities, saying: "Leadership requires vision, dedication, patience, communication, caring and courage. These are all qualities that Martin Taylor possesses. He has led CRDCN with a steady hand to renewed vigor and strength, enabling it to better serve Canada's research community. I wish Martin well deserved pleasure in all he undertakes and CRDCN continued success in its fine work."

Looking back to the Board of Directors, another long-time Board member is Benoit Dostie, Professor of Applied Economics at HEC Montréal. Dostie and Magali Girard, who is Martin's counterpart as Executive Director of the Quebec Inter-University Centre for Social Statistics (QICSS), had this to say: "As Martin prepares to retire as Director of the CRDCN, we cannot help but feel a little data-driven mélancolie. After some number crunching, we've determined that Martin's exceptional leadership can be characterized by many things, but foremost in our mind, Martin is a true builder, with an innate ability to bring people together and develop collaborative relationships across the data ecosystem, which led to the establishment of structured and effec-

tive governance at the CRDCN, renewed and improved funding, and strategic directions to facilitate access to an increasing number of datasets. His legacy will undoubtedly be felt physically (and hopefully virtually) for many years to come. Merci Martin!"

Rodney Ghali, Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet of the Impact and Innovation Unit at the Privy Council Office, Government of Canada, has also served as a long-time member of CRDCN's Board of Directors. He had these well-wishes for Martin on his retirement: "Congratulations Martin on such a well-deserved retirement. I would like to sincerely thank you for your leadership, guidance and mentorship over the years. You have taught me much about what effective governance is, how to lead a board, and how to bring diverse views together towards consensus. I am grateful for all that I have learned from you and I carry those lessons with me daily. All the best in this new chapter."

Of course, our discussion of partnerships would not be nearly complete without mention of our colleagues at Statistics Canada, with whom CRDCN works so closely to manage the network of Research Data Centres and promote education, training and research, and our colleagues at McMaster University, CRDCN's host institution since its inception in 2000 and whose research administration we've worked so closely with over the years.

"Martin is thoughtful and strategic, he inspires those who work with him, and he understands and responds to the needs of the entire network," says Dr. Karen Mossman, Vice-President of Research at McMaster University. "He is the quintessential leader and among

the most well-rounded individuals I've had the privilege to work with and learn from. The CRDCN and its partners have benefited greatly from Martin's guidance, wisdom, and humility. He has positioned it for success and, by so doing, has ensured evidenced-based research will inform our country's public policies."

Anil Arora, the Chief Statistician of Canada, spoke on behalf of Statistics Canada, saying: "We wish Dr. Taylor a well-deserved retirement and thank him for his exceptional service to the research community in Canada. Martin has been an outstanding ambassador for access to and use of Statistics Canada data. During his tenure as Executive Director of the CRDCN, he successfully navigated the federal funding renewal and made great strides in building closer ties between academic stakeholders and data providers. Above all, the partnerships he developed through active listening, diplomacy, and mutual respect fostered an environment where diverse opinions and constructive feedback were valued." Adds Arora, "It has been an honour and a privilege for me, as well as many of my colleagues at Statistics Canada, to have worked closely with Martin over the years."

No one, however, has worked more closely with Martin and could speak to his impact on CRDCN and his skills than Special Advisor to CRDCN Michelle Gauthier.

"Martin is an exceptional servant-leader who brings that rare combination of excellence, integrity, and kindness to everything he undertakes. He makes everyone with whom he interacts feel understood and valued," says Gauthier. "He exudes competence, credibility and confidence and has a profound ability to reconcile diverse perspectives and interests for the common good. In his time at the helm of CRDCN, he has solidified the relationships with all the Network's key partners, secured seminal federal funding for the next six years, and significantly enhanced the capacity of the central staff team. His vision, passion, and unwavering commitment have set the Network on an ambitious course for the future. It has been an honour and privilege to serve as his Special Advisor."

The entire CRDCN staff cannot overstate Martin's impact on the organization and how he has made each one of us feel a valuable and meaningful part of the team each day and fostered an environment of collaboration and inclusion.

In his own words

We also wanted to provide Martin a chance to reflect on this milestone and share some words:

"In appreciation … Little could I have imagined in late 2015 when invited to apply for the CRDCN's Executive Director position what a fulfilling experience it would be! It's a truism to say that 'it's all about the people,' but it is. In our case, that translates to the invaluable support of the CRDCN Board, our Academic Directors, our Statistics Canada colleagues, the McMaster research administration, and especially the central staff team, that it has been my privilege to build.

My executive assistant when I was VP Research at UVic observed that 'you like building things.' I confess I had never thought of myself in those terms, but it does resonate as I reflect on what we together have been able to achieve over the past seven years to strengthen what was already a well-established and successful research organization. There are as always new opportunities to seize and challenges to meet which I know Natalie Harrower as my successor is so well qualified to do with the support of the many colleagues and partners that I have been privileged to work with and learn from. Few of us at a later stage of our careers have the opportunity to serve in ways that the CRDCN has allowed me to do, and I will be ever thankful for the exhilarating experience. A special thanks to those Board members and staff who have worked most closely with me; I count it a special blessing to know you as both colleagues and friends. I look forward to hearing of the on-going success and impact of the CRDCN as one of Canada's premier research networks."

Partnering to push the transfer of knowledge

The CRDCN not only facilitates access to Statistics Canada microdata through Research Data Centres (RDCs), but key objectives of the Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN) also include training and knowledge mobilization.

One of the methods by which these objectives are met is through our focus on partnerships, such as with Statistics Canada and with academic journals such as *Canadian Public Policy* and the *Canadian Journal of Economics*.

Existing series

While the CRDCN has partnered with Statistics Canada on training sessions, seminars and webinars for many years, the webinar series conducted with *Canadian Public Policy* and the *Canadian Journal of Economics* began in 2021 and has produced several webinar sessions on various topics ranging from the economic and mental health impacts of the pandemic to immigration, household economics and education.

The webinar series with both journals continues this year, with the first session in conjunction with *Canadian Public Policy* on April 19. The topic for that discussion will be on two policy-focused research papers on economics and health around end-of-life topics.

Additionally, all of our webinars and training sessions are provided for future viewing on our YouTube channel.

New Series

New for 2023, however, is an exciting new series with Statistics Canada called the Open Mic Data Series. The approach for this training series is different and less formal than the traditional presentation of microdata information or research papers.

"We're hoping to get away from the one-way flow of information that has been the hallmark of the webinars for the past two years," says Grant Gibson, CRDCN's Assistant Director, Research and Evaluation. "In the open mic we are really trying to push the researchers

Photo: Chris Montgomery/Unsplash

to ask questions and share their questions and concerns with the data custodians."

The series began on March 1, with a session about the Business-Employee Analytical Microdata (BEAM), a dataset that will be arriving in the RDCs in the near future.

"The BEAM is a set of linkable individual and business microdata, extracted from Statistics Canada's tax and administrative data. It is built for research purposes and we really hope it can facilitate more research to produce evidence and insights that inform Canadians on important economic and social trends that matter," says Huju Liu, a Principal Researcher at Statistics Canada, who led the session.

Liu feels that this kind of session benefits different types of data users, including university researchers, policymakers and students.

"The BEAM includes rich information on both individuals and businesses, allowing for research and analysis on a wider range of topics. It can be particularly helpful for graduate students who are still in search of potential research topics for their dissertations. In addition, the [forthcoming] availability of BEAM in RDCs makes the access much easier for graduate students who otherwise would not have sufficient funding for accessing similar datasets in the past."

Extending knowledge about access to this dataset is a crucial reason behind why Liu felt partnering with CRDCN for this training session was important.

"CRDCN is a premier national network of health and social researchers in Canada. One of the purposes of this release is to improve more equitable data access for a much wider research community. I believe that partnering with CRDCN can help us get the message out to many researchers from coast to coast," he says.

The second session in the partnership series will be held April 6, where Tristan Cayn of Statistics Canada will look at the Longitudinal Immigration Statistical Environment.

Save the date!

Calling all policymakers .... the 2023 CRDCN Annual Conference is designed with you in mind. Come join us in person for the first time in more than three years to:

- Discover and discuss CRDCN experts' latest analyses of Statistics Canada microdata to inform your work on issues of importance to Canadians.

- Participate in workshops that will advance research, policy and data development, and knowledge mobilization in your areas of expertise.

- Network in-person with researchers, data organisations, and other policymakers in both structured and informal settings.

- Join our career pathways workshop and get to know the next generation of data scientists and their mentors to inform your recruitment efforts.

Our new Executive Director is eager to welcome you in-person from November 21st to 23rd at the Sheraton Hotel in Hamilton near the Network's host institution, McMaster University.

What you need to know

- Join our webinar series with *Canadian Public Policy* and the *Canadian Journal of Economics* continues this year, with the first edition on April 19.
- Along with Statistics Canada, we have launched an open mic series that hopes to get researchers and attendees to ask questions and promote dialogue with the data custodians.
- All of our webinars and sessions are available on our YouTube channel.

Snapshots strive to connect researchers and policymakers

The research undertaken in Research Data Centres (RDCs) is insightful and rigorous, providing tangible benefits to both policymakers and other scholars studying the subject. However, to help further our network's strategic goal of connecting researchers and end users of research, the Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN) has been publishing Research-Policy Snapshots – single page summaries of published research articles or policy reports in a format that aims to convey the significance of that work to a broad audience.

"One of the objectives in the CRDCN Strategic Plan 2019-2024 is to 'connect researchers and end users' and this includes adopting 'best practices to mobilize research results for the benefit of Canadians,'" says Johanne Provençal, CRDCN Research Program Director. "The research and professional literature both make clear the importance of recognizing differences between discourse communities when trying to communicate across those communities. The research-policy snapshots aim to do this by distilling a scholarly journal article or policy report into a one-page summary that shares highlights of the research undertaken."

The snapshots are crafted by the researchers, using a template provided by CRDCN, and then revised based on feedback from members of the CRDCN Research portfolio, who give advice on how the snapshot can be made more accessible to readers who may not be experts in that particular field of research.

"Researchers, if they wish, could include the snapshot in their description of their knowledge mobilization activities in their funding proposals. The snapshots also have permanent identifiers and direct readers to the full journal article or research report," says Provençal.

For policy colleagues, these snapshots provide way to quickly ascertain the highlights of the work done by researchers:

- What research was done?
- What did the researchers find?
- What datasets did they use at the RDC?
- What are the policy implications of this research?

The snapshots, which were originally based upon the research summary format used by Research Impact Canada, have been well received and shared among our network on social media. However, this year we will be exploring different ways of sharing snapshots among policy colleagues. The design will also go through a refresh, and we have revised the snapshot template to show how the data tell a story.

"We have also discussed inviting faculty members to encourage their students to draft snapshots of publications that students and faculty co-author, for exposure to the students' research, but also as skill development in sharing results with readers outside of academic circles," says Provençal.

Three digests of snapshots, as well as the individual snapshots themselves, are available to be viewed anytime at our website.

What you need to know

- The Research-Policy Snapshots aim to distill a journal article into a one-page summary accessible by a wide range of readers.
- Snapshots are crafted by the researchers, honed with feedback from the CRDCN Research team.
- A new format for the Snapshots will be made available later this year.