



January 27, 2014

Patricia Demers
Chair, Expert Panel on
The Status and Future of Canada's Libraries and Archives
The Royal Society of Canada
Walter House / Maison Walter
282 Somerset W/o
Ottawa ON K2P 0J6

Dear Ms. Demers:

On behalf of the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL), I am pleased to provide this submission to the Expert Panel. Your panel has posed thoughtful questions concerning the future of archives and libraries in Canada and we are confident that you will hear from many concerned librarians and archivists, some of whom will be members of OCUL. Our submission begins with responses to your questions about our organization. This is followed by a general response to the framing questions which you have provided.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Expert Panel's consultation and we look forward to learning more about the results of your investigations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathleen Scardellato", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kathleen Scardellato
Executive Director
Ontario Council of University Libraries

Collaborate Innovate Deliver

About OCUL

1. What is the nature and make-up of your organization?

The [Ontario Council of University Libraries](#) (OCUL) is a consortium of Ontario's 21 university libraries, currently serving nearly 500,000 students. First established in 1967, OCUL operates as an affiliate of the Council of Ontario Universities. Our membership includes the libraries of all twenty Ontario universities and the Royal Military College of Canada.

Our strength lies in our commitment to work together to maximize our collective expertise and resources. We enhance information services in Ontario and beyond through collective purchasing and shared digital information infrastructure, collaborative planning, advocacy, assessment, research, partnerships, communications, and professional development.

The OCUL vision is to be a recognized leader, provincially, nationally and globally, in the transformative development and delivery of scholarly resources and innovative services. The OCUL mission is to collaborate in the development and delivery of enhanced, innovative, and effective information services and resources for Ontario's universities. The OCUL strategic plan, accessible at <http://www.ocul.on.ca/node/29>, was adopted in 2011 and includes three strategic directions with associated goals:

- To collaborate to provide a world-class learning experience for Ontario's students
- To expand shared digital research infrastructure
- To provide and preserve academic resources essential for teaching, learning, and research

OCUL's [governance structure](#) was changed in 2013 as a result of an organizational effectiveness review to ensure that OCUL continues to harness the expertise, vision and sustained engagement of its membership. With standing committees dedicated to operational oversight of our flagship technological infrastructure, [Scholars Portal](#), and of our consortial e-resources licensing program, and, strategically, to planning and assessment, OCUL has strengthened its capacity to achieve its goals. Creativity and innovation are channeled through a network of OCUL Communities of interest which provide forums for information-sharing and discussion, and development of ideas that may grow into new collaborative pursuits for OCUL.

While all OCUL Directors serve on its board, there is an elected Executive Committee of five including a Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and Director-at-Large. OCUL is served by a central staff of five led by an Executive Director.

2. Does your organization provide services: (a) directly to Users? Or, (b) to members who make-up the organization?

The OCUL organization provides services to its members. As one of its most important initiatives, OCUL collectively supports a shared technological infrastructure for access to digital library resources and services – Scholars Portal <http://spotdocs.scholarsportal.info/display/sp/home>. In turn, Scholars Portal provides services directly to users – the students, faculty, researchers and staff at Ontario universities.

Since 2001, the Scholars Portal service has been provided under a service agreement with the University of Toronto Libraries.

3. In terms of Question 2, describe the services provided directly to Users, and if they are consortial in nature please describe the mechanisms in place to define, refine and measure the impact of the services, particularly as they relate to Canadians.

Scholars Portal hosts one of the world's largest digital collections of journal articles and e-books. Since 2007, Ontario has provided several development funding grants to OCUL so that the scope of Scholars Portal could be expanded. Repositories, access and research tools for social sciences and geospatial data and e-books have all been created with Ontario's support and shared across Ontario's universities. Scholars Portal is unique in Canada, with few peers worldwide, and is the envy of universities in many other jurisdictions. Scholars Portal also offers an online inter-library loan platform for Ontario's universities, bibliographic citation management tools like RefWorks, a virtual reference chat service, and an accessible texts repository. New programs in development include support for open access publishing and research data management. Scholars Portal Journals is a trusted digital repository, the first in Canada to earn this designation from the Center for Research Libraries.

The services that Scholars Portal provides are all consortial in nature. While in some cases, OCUL members may choose to opt-in to particular services, most are provided as core services in all of the Ontario universities. OCUL's planning and assessment process requires an evidence-based approach to the development of new services, including cost/benefit analysis, and plans for sustainability. Typically, OCUL develops new Scholars Portal services with grant funds and then moves into a sustainable operation at the end of project development. All of the Scholars Portal services are fully-sustained by the OCUL membership.

4. Would Canadians know of, or understand, the contribution you make to library/archival service in Canada?

Our organization does not expend much effort on making its contribution known to the general public. OCUL, and its achievements, are well-known to our university library colleagues across Canada, to many Ontario library colleagues in other sectors, to some academic colleagues in Ontario, within the Council of Ontario Universities, and within some Ontario ministries which have provided us with funding. Depending on whether OCUL and Scholars Portal are known brands in a particular Ontario university (and this does vary from campus to campus), many graduates from our universities, as well as faculty who have been recently educated in Ontario or have worked here, are aware of the advantages that both Scholars Portal and our consortial e-resources licensing program have provided them.

5. What inhibits you from providing services that ultimately would improve library/archive services to Canadians?

With Ontario's support, OCUL has been able to provide extensive services that have improved library services to our community. At times, competing priorities and fiscal challenges for our member libraries are the main factors that inhibit us from providing all of the services that are needed.

6. What do you see as the challenges for libraries and archives in the forthcoming years?

About half of the OCUL libraries are members of CARL and share many of the issues which CARL will report to you. We would like to highlight, though, that many of the OCUL member libraries are much smaller than CARL libraries and have significant funding challenges.

These smaller libraries are being challenged to provide support to larger student populations with static or diminishing budgets and user expectations of service have also dramatically changed. These changing expectations include the provision of alternative formats to support accessibility, alternate platforms to support use of mobile devices, alternate pathways to access to education and resources, etc. At the same time, libraries are facing the implementation of more restrictive privacy and copyright policies. These libraries have very small numbers of employees compared with CARL libraries and so their challenges are primarily in finding staff who have a range of skills to address modern library management.

Other issues facing many OCUL libraries relate to shortage of collections space. Some institutions have their own storage facilities but many do not. We have developed agreements on last print copy so that some libraries can weed their collections safe in the knowledge that other libraries in Ontario have copies of these resources and will lend them. There are also partnerships developing for shared last print preservation repositories.

In 2013, OCUL held a Summit to consider issues around special collections and digital preservation. This has sparked interest in collaboration in Ontario around archival and special collections as well as adding to the growing demand for support for digital preservation both at Scholars Portal and at individual institutions.

For most institutions, but particularly for the research intensive institutions, the issues facing the OCUL libraries relate to the need to support research data storage, access and preservation. Scholars Portal has just launched a cloud storage network initiative in which ten of our libraries are active partners. This will help all of our members to store large quantities of digital files. Some of our larger members are actively engaged in supporting the preservation of “big data” and are working with partners outside Ontario to develop a national research data infrastructure.

OCUL tries to assist all its members by reducing collection costs through effective licensing and cost-sharing, by reducing service delivery costs through Scholars Portal services, by reducing development costs for new systems and initiatives through having a creative and innovative systems development team at Scholars Portal, etc. In short, we try to level the playing field within Ontario by providing a centrally supported state of the art knowledge infrastructure.

One of our current challenges is investigating a collaborative approach to our integrated library systems. In other words, is there an appetite for trying to work to a common systems infrastructure to reduce costs for all libraries and to improve the flexibility and range of service to our users. Most of us are struggling to update our information architecture and there could be significant advantages to having a common platform. We are currently looking at models of best practice, to determining the total cost of ownership for our 21 systems for acquiring, processing and providing access to our collections.

The challenge for OCUL staff and OCUL Executive is to manage many of these cost-sharing developments in a fair and equitable way for all members despite the range in ability to contribute financially or professionally and to get consensus on future directions for the consortium. Our recent retreat on our governance was very positive and achieved a very high degree of agreement. Having said that, it is a symptom of a more challenging economic environment that some OCUL developments and services are now “opt in” or “pay to play”.

Looking to the future, our members have said that their primary challenge is to provide the advanced content, facilities and equipment and library staff with appropriate expertise to support the academic and research needs of a growing university community. With enrolment figures expected to continue to rise, and with the focus on participatory learning in a technology rich environment, there is an increasing need for library staff with advanced science and technology backgrounds. All of our members are extending their traditional services to support scholarly communication in their institutions through the provision of institutional repositories, open access support and funds, and in some cases support for the production of online open access journals and monographs. These new areas of support have usually been accomplished without much additional funding and in some cases at the expense of traditional collections budgets.

One of the particular challenges facing OCUL is how far we extend our services and resources outside of Ontario. Scholars Portal is the only trusted digital repository in Canada at the moment and is regarded by many libraries outside of Ontario as the national hub for future digital infrastructure to support research data management and digital preservation. Certainly OCUL has supported Scholars Portal in being a hub in the Canadian Polar Data Network and in being a key player at national talks on digital infrastructure. Scholars Portal already is a national hub for RefWorks and is considering taking on a national distribution role in relation to scholarly publications. How far we take our remit outside Ontario is a major discussion point for us and with the Council of Ontario Universities within which we operate as an affiliate.

Other challenges for us include how we will support provincial initiatives such as Ontario Online, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) legislation and implementation, etc. We have recently completed a pilot to support accessible e-texts and, as a result, are launching a new service to support people with disabilities. We are active players in COU working groups about how to support online learning on a provincial basis.

Framing Questions:

The framing questions from the Expert Panel are more suitable for responses from libraries and archives. Our response will not attempt to address these questions individually.

Because OCUL's activities reflect the priorities of our member libraries, we would like to highlight some of the contributions which OCUL is making *to support the learning experience for Ontario's students, to expand a shared digital research infrastructure, and to provide and preserve academic resources essential for teaching, learning and research.*

One of OCUL's goals is *to ensure maximum accessibility to digital library resources and services regardless of locations, preferences, and individual abilities.* The Scholars Portal Accessible Content E-Portal or ACE is a growing repository of accessible format texts available to users with print disabilities at participating OCUL institutions. Aimed at making Ontario's university library collections more accessible, the repository has established a collection of over 1,350 texts in five accessible formats (2 types of PDFs, Text, DAISY and ePub) in the past twelve months. ACE operates as part of the Scholars Portal Books platform. Users with verified print disabilities are given access to browse, search and download texts from the secure repository through their home institutions. Users can also request additional texts to be added to the repository through their accessibility offices. ACE began as a pilot project in 2012 and was made possible through a collaboration between OCUL and the University of Toronto, with support from the Government of Ontario as a part of the EnAbling Change Program. This program is an initiative of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario and provides financial support and expertise to organizations to educate an industry or sector across the province on their obligations under the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (AODA). ACE transitioned to an ongoing Scholars Portal service in 2014.

To continue to address accessibility concerns, our next priority is to address the critical issues which our libraries face in providing accessible media to their users. We anticipate being able to start a new toolkit project in 2014 that will document the diverse practices for video which are employed in Ontario universities, provide clarity on sharing video captioning under Canadian law, and provide a detailed analysis of potential costs and benefits of a variety of approaches -- local and shared -- to be compliant with the AODA and serve students and faculty with hearing disabilities more effectively.

Two of OCUL's goals to support expansion of shared digital research infrastructure are *to consolidate OCUL success and strengthen staff expertise to support digital research infrastructure;* and *to work with partners to build a national research infrastructure.* We are active on many fronts but would like to highlight one collaboration which has been particularly strategic for us. OCUL is a founding member of the [Canadian Polar Data Network](#) (CPDN) which was established in 2010 with funding from the Canadian International Polar Year Program Office, Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development Canada. The ongoing and evolving mission of the CPDN is to provide a sustainable research data management infrastructure, encompassing preservation and access, for polar (Arctic and Antarctic) science research and monitoring initiated from and taking place in Canada. Working with our partners at the University of Waterloo Polar Data Catalogue, University of Alberta Libraries, NRC Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (CISTI), and the Department of Fisheries & Oceans, Science Sector, OCUL Scholars Portal staff have been able to deepen their expertise through several

hands-on research data management projects, including those supporting the International Polar Year, the Beaufort Regional Environment Assessment (BREA), and the Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS). A new project is just getting underway to support the Northern Contaminants Program. As a result of this network experience, we are now involved in national discussions, led by CARL, to create a Research Data Management Network.

A critical goal for OCUL is *to preserve Ontario academic library collections, both print and digital*. On the face of it, this may appear to be rather obvious but, as the Expert Panel will likely hear from most libraries, the transformation from print to digital is presenting many challenges for libraries and archives. On the digital front, OCUL is continuing to build trusted digital repositories in Scholars Portal. Having achieved this in 2013 for our Journals collection of more than 31 million articles, our current priority is preservation for our growing collection of more than 500,000 e-books (both born-digital and digitized). For print / analogue collections, OCUL is facilitating a planning process with our members to identify collaborative futures for distributed shared storage systems that can be sustained over the long term. Our members recognize that this is not just a question of storage facilities. If we are to collaborate in some meaningful way, we will want to ensure that this collaboration includes integration with all of the library systems that support research, teaching and learning.

Finally, OCUL has two goals *to expand the depth and breadth of digital resources available to the OCUL community; and to maximize the value of shared digital library services*. One of our strategic initiatives is to work with Canadian partners to support Canadian scholarly communications. For example, OCUL supports open access publishing by providing hosting services for the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) suite of services to publish journals and monographs. And, in another initiative, we are working with the Canadian university presses to create a made-in-Canada hosting service for scholarly monographs published by the presses. The partnership will bring together our academic library consortium with an academic publishing consortium to enhance the marketing and distribution of scholarly texts within the Canadian academic library community.

On behalf of OCUL members, it's important to say that while the bulk of our response has focused on library collections and services which we provide consortially, several OCUL members are responsible for substantial archives and special collections located in our universities. Besides the major international research collection at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto, there are significant collections in many of our libraries (for example, McMaster University, Western University, and Carleton University). Last year (2013), our Digital Curation Summit focused on collaborative opportunities to support special collections and archives initiatives. There was a clear desire among Summit participants for opportunities to share knowledge, experience, work being done at our institutions, and occasions for collaboration. As a result, OCUL has established a [Digital Curation Community](#) with this focus. It is also anticipated that the community will serve as a sounding board for issues around digital curation, and provide advice for curation focused activities within OCUL.