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Partner Response to Canada's Fundamental Science Review

by Caroline Winter | 1 December 2017 | English, Observations and Responses, Responses | 0 comments



Some Observations from the Perspective of a Past and Present Participant in CFI-funded Projects

This response to [Canada's Fundamental Science Review](#) was written by [Brian Owen](#), Associate Dean of Libraries at SFU Library & PKP Managing Director

The [Public Knowledge Project](#) (PKP) has been very fortunate to be a participant in three projects funded by the [Canadian Foundation for Innovation](#) (CFI). The Simon Fraser University (SFU) Library and PKP participated in the CFI-funded [Synergies project](#) from 2007-12; and is currently working with [Érudit](#) (University of Montreal) on [CFI Cyberinfrastructure](#) (2017-20) and [CFI Major Science Initiative](#) (MSI) (2017-22) projects. All three initiatives have revolved around the development and provision of software and

platforms to support scholarly publishing and related research in Canada, with a particular emphasis on the Humanities and Social Sciences. The following comments focus primarily on CFI-related topics and reflect PKP's experience on these projects.


There is a lot to like in [Canada's Fundamental Science Review](#). It was good to see a number of recommendations focusing on the level of funding provided by the various federal agencies, especially CFI. Recommendation 6.8 on shifting CFI to a stable annual budget, e.g. \$300M (128); recommendation 6.10 proposing to increase CFI-MSI funding proportion from 40% to 60% for Major Research Facilities (MRF) (133); and Recommendation 7.3 to allow up to a 40% for Facilities & Administration costs in grant budgets (149) are all great. However, the report doesn't appear to address the disparity between Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) and other disciplines when it comes to obtaining a significant share of infrastructure funding that is provided via CFI. There are 17 Major Science Initiatives that receive CFI-MSI funding, I believe only one of them (Erudit/PKP) is HSS-related.

Similarly, the review included a lot of positive recommendations on harmonization of policies and closer collaboration amongst the four major granting agencies ([NSERC](#), [CIHR](#), [SSHRC](#), and [CFI](#)). However, there was no mention that I could find of significant policy initiatives – such as the [Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications](#) and the [Tri-Agency Statement of Principles on Digital Data Management](#) – that are already well along, and have major implications for many of us. Generally, all of the many manifestations of “open” were only touched upon lightly. Arguably, it may not have been intended as a major focus for this study, but for all of us very interested in this area it is unfortunate. There are also some significant cost implications especially for research data management and this becomes critical if additional funding is being proposed. Perhaps some of it needs to be earmarked accordingly.

One of the more significant recommendations was the proposed creation of a National Advisory Council on Research and Innovation (NACRI) that would provide broad oversight of the *federal* research and innovation ecosystems. The emphasis on federal is mine as the list of NACRI's responsibilities only contains one very soft reference to provincial funding agencies – “liaison with parallel bodies in provinces and territories and internationally as appropriate” (60). Perhaps these entities fall outside the purview of this study, but it is important to note they contribute 40% of the total funding for most CFI projects. Unfortunately, that support is not a *fait accompli*; there is provincial diversity in the review criteria and approval of matching CFI funds.

In some provinces current political agendas may come into play. Under the previous Liberal government in British Columbia, the [BC Knowledge Development Fund](#) (BCKDF) that was responsible for providing the 40% funding match for successful CFI proposals was only approving those proposals that clearly demonstrated a clear linkage to the province's job creation and industry development strategy. A number of CFI proposals (including the CFI Cyberinfrastructure application that PKP was a participant) were not successful in obtaining matching BCKDF support. When there are multiple participants across Canada, the lack of support from one province impacts the entire project. It also suggests the approval process between CFI and the equivalent provincial funding agencies could be more carefully sequenced and coordinated.

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