



OSPO

OPEN SCHOLARSHIP POLICY OBSERVATORY



Integrated Digital Scholarship Ecosystem

by Caroline Winter | 21 February 2018 | English, Observations, Observations and Responses | 0 comments



This interview was conducted by Sarah Milligan.

In December 2017, Clare Appavoo, Executive Director of the [Canadian Research Knowledge Network \(CRKN\)](#) agreed to talk with Sarah Milligan about the [Integrated Digital Scholarship Ecosystem \(IDSE\)](#), a project envisioned “as a means to advance integration within the academic library community in Canada by understanding the complexity of the digital landscape and by seeking opportunities facilitate alignment of key stakeholders and providers” (“[Integrated Digital Scholarship Ecosystem \(IDSE\) Project](#)”, n.p.).

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

Milligan: Thank you so much for agreeing to have an interview with us. This is our first time having an interview with an INKE Partnership member in this way and talking about a policy that you’ve developed, so it’s a bit of an experiment and I appreciate you being our guinea pig.

Appavoo: My pleasure.

Milligan: As you know, the *Open Scholarship Policy Observatory* is looking at a wide variety of policies at a federal level, at an international level, and also looking at the policies from our Partnership members. We thought talking about the IDSE would be a good way to bring CRKN into that conversation. We can start off with my first question: what is your role with the Canadian Research Knowledge Network? What is your role specifically with the Integrated Digital Scholarship Ecosystem? And who else has been involved with that and what are their roles?

Appavoo: I'm the **Executive Director** at CRKN and in that role I was involved in the development of the concept of IDSE which really arose out of a board strategic planning session that came out of a concept that the board was working on at the time. We'd talked about building a strategic objective of collaborating to advance digital scholarship and as we were envisioning that, we developed the IDSE concept, specifically to focus on the academic library community as opposed to the broader research community. In the academic library community, we tend to spin things off: you get an idea and you start another organization; you get an idea and you do another project—it's a bit fractured. The idea of the IDSE was to be able to bring some of those elements together, to integrate more effectively, and to align those activities with the broader digital scholarly community, to ensure that we are going in the same direction as other members in the broader community. So I think that is where things evolved.

We hired **Kim Silk**, our special projects officer, to focus on IDSE and to develop it as a concept. She was brought in on a two-year contract and has been the lead on IDSE in the past two and half years. Under her leadership, our work was evolving the concept of the IDSE, developing a work plan, exploring what we should be doing and how we should focus our efforts in the delivery of that particular concept. Kim's contract with us ends at the end of this year. She's been the primary driver of this and is now moving on to other projects.

Milligan: That leads to my second question. How has IDSE evolved as a concept when it was first proposed? In the last two and a half years, I guess there have been a lot of changes?

Appavoo: Absolutely. It's gone through several stages. Initially there was a research project and **Mike Ridley** wrote the first exploratory paper for IDSE and did some background thinking and conducted an environmental scan. He did interviews with the extended community including the research community, the extended digital scholarly community, and the academic library community. He really did that ground work to evolve the concept. And then from there, we had a board review of his initial paper and a board response that highlighted from the recommendations he'd made in his original paper: *here are the things we think that we can pursue*. That's the point at which we hired Kim to focus on actually delivering to some of that. One of the things that had been in the original idea was that as we think about specific projects in this landscape of integration, we might be able to find some funding to help advance some this, and we never got ourselves to that point. I think we've been very successful but as we are all finding when we are trying to undertake particular scholarly projects, getting funding to be able to sustain that is a struggle. That's partially because we didn't focus on the funding side, but it also means that we have to be very project oriented in the way we do things. We can't be as systemic as we might want to be.

The original paper talked about this as a big project, and when Kim first came on board we focused a lot of her attention on trying to map the ecosystem. We ran into a lot of challenges there. When you map something that is as complex as this, it's changing and evolving all the time. You would be taking a snapshot in time, and how do you maintain that? And even how do we represent that? Can we show a physical map of Canada for example and say, "these types of projects are going on here", and "these types of projects are going on there"? It just proved to be really difficult. Even gathering information about what sort of projects are going on across the country—there's a lot of stuff going on. We'd hoped to be able to pull that information together and we really struggled to be able to do that. At that point, we

pushed ahead and said, “we know there’s some specific things we can undertake.” The first opportunity really came with the [CNDHI](#) (Canadian National Digital Heritage Index) project. This was an area where we were successful in getting a grant. Library and Archives Canada had a grant available for doing digital heritage projects and that’s where we developed the concept of putting together an index of heritage content that’s been digitized at, and resides at universities across Canada, as well as provincial and territorial libraries. That was the first step in letting go of trying to do the mapping piece and jumping into actually doing some concrete projects that we can move forward. [CNDHI](#) was the first of those projects.

Milligan: So, IDSE evolved from this huge massive project to a concept that drives other smaller projects. Is that fair to say?

Appavoo: That would be fair, yes. It’s an interesting dynamic in the community. Our board members are primarily university librarians; and we have a researcher, and a financial administrator and our board is chaired by a University President—that group of people will be thinking at a very strategic and high level. So they come up with a project that is very strategic in mind. When you go to try to deliver to that, the broader community itself is thinking more tactically, and really stretching to do that kind of broader strategic initiative is more palatable to the community if we break it up into smaller projects. That feels more concrete—something that they can put their arms around.

Milligan: That’s something that we’ve been exploring with the Open Scholarship Policy Observatory: these huge policy recommendations coming from top levels and what that looks like on the ground.

Appavoo: CRKN has traditionally been very much a functional organization—our work is around functional activity like licensing content. In initiating a broad reaching strategic initiative like the Integrated Digital Scholarship Ecosystem, CRKN was stretching beyond our traditional boundaries. Once we began to initiate more discreet projects, members were able to identify with the goals and to feel that this was a good concrete use of CRKN’s expertise.

Milligan: P.N. Edwards et al. wrote that “Knowledge infrastructures not only provide maps of known territories—they reshape the geography itself,” which is a concept you and Mike Ridley referenced in relation to IDSE in a [paper for ACRL 2015](#). Could you describe some of the ways CRKN has been reshaping the geography of the digital scholarship ecosystem in Canada?

Appavoo: That’s really interesting. Mike Ridley pulled that one out. I give him a huge amount of credit.

It’s good to go back to the original papers and be reminded of those concepts. You get so far along in activities, you stop recalling where you were coming from. I think for sure there have been very concrete re-shapings going on. I think most recently is this work—and it wasn’t CRKN alone by any means, but CRKN with several organizations—that brought together the [ORCID Canada consortium](#). That’s pretty powerful stuff. There were two key things that made me think, “Ok, we should perhaps be involved in an ORCID Canada consortium.” One of which was one of our members who’d said, “we’re looking at doing an ORCID membership as an institution and maybe CRKN could negotiate a consortial discount,” so we started exploring it from there. And then it was actually at an INKE meeting where researchers were talking about ORCID and how much better it would be if everybody were using ORCIDs, and it was like, *oh!* I was getting this from two different angles. So, then I started talking to a few other organizations like [CASRAI](#) (Consortia Advancing Standards in Research Administration) in particular. Initially CRKN and CASRAI started the conversation and reached out. It ended up that a lot of organizations helped to drive this, including [CANARIE](#), [Compute Canada](#), [CASRAI](#), [Research Data Canada](#) (RDC), and [CUCCIO](#). There were a lot of different players and stakeholders involved in developing the consortium approach.

It is one of those things where you bring it to the table and it’s going to be a year or two to see the impact, how that really is changing the geography so to speak, but I think that’s going to be a big game changer for us in Canada. This is not only a CRKN- initiative, it’s very much part of that broader community. We became the signatory to that agreement—one organization has to take an administrative leadership

role there, so among the community, we determined that CRKN could do that, because that is what we do: we sign licenses, we sign agreements, we collect money from multiple organizations to bring it together. ORCID also requires that a consortium has a member support specialist to be able to support the integrations of the various institutions. We host that person at our organization, [Gloria Booth-Morrison](#).

The ORCID-CA license was signed in May 2017. The initial discussions probably started back in December 2015; we did a little bit of socializing, a little bit of exploration. We had some initial meetings with the first group of stakeholders that were going to drive what we ended up calling the Implementation working group, and got together in May 2016. From there it took a full year—it was a long time, but a successful one. I think it is going to prove successful. We have 31 members already in Year 1. We'll end up with significantly more as we go forward. One of the key pieces there from the researcher point of view, was can ORCID be integrated into the Canadian Common CV (CCV) to make populating your CV easier? So that's still an element that needs to be worked on but it's coming together as well.

Milligan: It's a really exciting initiative.

Appavoo: Yes. So that's one of the IDSE outcomes. I think the [Institutional Mobilization Toolkit](#), which I know you have a question about, is definitely one where the intent is very much to be facilitating conversation between library and researcher, library and administration. There are different levels—the CRKN community has 75 members: the smallest institution has 450 FTE and then you have U of T at the other end of the spectrum. So, larger institutions have scholarly communications librarians, and they have active programs and are very much involved with their VPs of research and all of that. But the smaller institutions have smaller libraries, fewer staff; they are doing lots of different things under one hat and they need these kinds of tools to be able to help stimulate those conversations. They don't have time to develop them themselves. So that's not really a hugely visible change of the geography but it's a softer evolution and creation of dialogue, I think. And scholarly communications experts have been writing about scholarly communication and the publishing system being broken since the 1960s—it's been going on forever. That dialogue needs to happen between library and researcher, and not just within the library.

CRKN has also been actively involved in the [Leadership Council for Digital Research Infrastructure](#) (LCDRI). Because that's about research infrastructure, the key players tend to be more Compute Canada and CANARIE and RDC, and a lot of it has been focused on research data management, which is not something that CRKN is actively involved in. That group itself will ultimately have an impact on the ecosystem, in a pretty deep way. A couple of papers from that group have been recently sent to [Minister Duncan](#) about how the digital ecosystem and landscape in Canada should look, with some recommendations. It's worth taking a look at the papers that are there.

Milligan: Going back to your point about some of the softer things that you do, the reason that I really liked that Edwards metaphor, is that it can be such small things that reshape geography—it can be a single stone that changes the course. So I like that focus on the smaller things that you are doing that could have a big impact down the line.

Appavoo: It's interesting to think about the evolution of the project and talk to you right now, now that we're three years into this. How has it evolved? It's good to reflect back on that. When Mike was first writing the first IDSE paper, he pushed us a little bit—and I think it was a good push, because in the library community we have a tendency to think, “what can we pick off that's the low hanging fruit?” What he was really pushing at and got pushback from the rest of the community about, but I think a good thing to really be challenging ourselves on is, if we are always only picking the low-hanging fruit, we are never working towards the bigger goals. You need to work on that, right? That stuff needs to happen. Yes, it takes longer and yes, you have to do it a little bit at a time, but it needs to happen as well in order to actually affect change in a really big kind of way.

Milligan: It's about finding that balance between having things that you can see immediately and having things that involve slower work. How have CRKN members responded to IDSE?

Appavoo: Let me talk about the positives first. The community has been supportive of the specific projects: CNDHI, Journal Usage Project, the Institutional Mobilization Toolkit, ORCID Canada—have all been very positively received. They are positively received when we don't contextualize them specifically for our own internal community as being IDSE projects. We are thinking about them internally in the organization as being part of that broader overriding initiative. There was some resistance, not to the concept of IDSE, but to CRKN doing IDSE. I think to some extent there is some resistance, not to the concepts behind IDSE, but resistance to the words and language around CRKN and whether we should be doing it. When we get down to specific projects, people are supportive.

The other thing, going back to the previous question, I think what has happened is that we have created a space that allowed us to do things like participate in the [Érudit Partnership](#). That partnership is evolving and we are working with Érudit and PKP on the [Coalition Publi.ca](#) initiative. In opening the landscape of thinking of the community through the notion of the IDSE we've created space to do some of those things that even if we don't call them part of the IDSE, they really are. They come out of that and the community has accepted them.

Milligan: We've talked a bit about some of the initiatives that have emerged from IDSE. Two of those I wanted to talk about in particular: the [Institutional Mobilization Toolkit](#) and the [Journal Usage Project](#). I was hoping you could tell me a bit about those and how they align with IDSE's overall goals?

Appavoo: During our AGM, one of our members proposed a resolution from the floor for CRKN with two criteria: one was to negotiate our licenses for increases that were no more than the Consumer Price Index, which is pretty low—in Canada it runs less than 2%. Licensing globally can run on average between 5 and 7% increases, with some way higher, like 20-30% increases. That was a substantial statement to say CRKN should do that. The other was that we should help members to facilitate conversations on campus about the challenges that members are facing with maintaining this content. Of course, researchers want their journals. But they are not, for the most part, aware of what those journals cost. We're talking about \$124 million a year. That's a lot of money. For an individual institution, just Elsevier alone can be 1/3 of their entire acquisitions budget—it's a lot of money. The original Institutional Mobilization Task Group was formed to look at how to initiate those conversations with faculty. The task group came up with the concept of the toolkit and worked on what elements were needed in the toolkit. Pulling out a one-pager on open access, and a one-pager on challenges to the scholarly communications system, and a bibliography—all of those things. That is how that came about. Once the toolkit was launched, it's really been up to the members themselves to take that and make use of it in their own institutions. We did some follow-up with members via teleconferences to say, "how are you using it? What's working, what's not working? What do we need to change?"—sharing best practices amongst the various members on that and trying to evolve the toolkit. We just did some updating of the documents—not a major overhaul—but in particular the French translations weren't great so we went back to the drawing board on that and fixed those. It's actually really helped to open the dialogue between the library perspective and research, to bring that library perspective into the minds of researchers without being "them and us".

In terms of the [Journal Usage Project](#) (JUP), that's a big, separate issue. It comes out of the same thing: if we are in this situation where it costs so much money to purchase content, how do we measure whether that's an effective use of our purchasing dollars? It all came back to [Vincent Larivière](#) who did this research with Université de Montreal and three other Quebec institutions, and he presented as a keynote at a CRKN AGM and people got pretty enthusiastic about it. He was talking about how only 20% of the journals are getting usage (the 80/20 rule); even of those, the top journals are really very few. But there was a little bit of question because it was all Quebec institutions that were studied, so would it be

different if you looked at this across the country in English-language institutions? It turns out it's not. It's pretty common. The piece of this study that's interesting is that it looks at usage, at actual download data, and at citation data, because what are your faculty citing? Are they citing from those same journals or are they citing something completely different? And then it actually looks at faculty perception. There's a survey that says what do you consider the top ten journals in your discipline for research and for teaching? Simple questions. There were 28 schools that participated and they now have their individual results. We now have a national result set as well. The challenge is there were a little under 6,000 researchers that responded to the survey. Not particularly high if you think that that's spread out over 28 institutions. Some institutions had a pretty good response rate, some were really *really* low. It's hard to see that that's representative data. Specifically, when they are talking about their top journals and you are dividing it up by disciplines, you get even smaller result sets. So it becomes difficult to quantify them. Having said all of that, the trends are clear. It's the same trend: 20% of the content is being used. There's a huge amount of the content that doesn't get used at all. The piece that requires dialogue and we still aren't completely comfortable with how to have this dialogue, if ten percent of journals from a particular package are the most expensive in terms of list price in the package (and they probably are because that's the way publishers price, they look at their top journals and tell you they are giving you these other journals for a very low price), is it really cost-effective to just pull out those journals and buy them alone? It's not. There's equal pressure on the system for researchers that need to publish. Even though they may be publishing in journals that aren't getting used, they still need to publish so they keep producing more content and it's a big vicious cycle.

So, we've done the study and what we're trying to figure out now is how we put the study into play. Our [Content Strategy Committee](#), which is a regular standing committee of CRKN that looks at how we negotiate licenses and works with our licensing team on our priorities, that committee is very much looking at the data to see, if we look at the actual JUP results against pricing, what does it tell us? What should we be doing with that? How do we want to talk to the community about that? We're still working that out.

Milligan: CRKN is very involved with the role of the academic library and scholarly communications in Canada. How do you envision other key members of the ecosystem—for example publishers and researchers integrating with IDSE activities?

Appavoo: We were talking a bit about the Coalition Publi.ca piece. [CARL](#) had an initiative, the [Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group](#), where several representatives from [CARL](#), [CRKN](#), [Canadian Association of Learned Journals \(CALJ\)](#), [Érudit](#) and [ACUP](#) (Association of Canadian University Presses) were participants. We discussed how we can be more effective working together as a broader community as part of that ecosystem. Canadian libraries are actively supportive of and committed to Canadian scholarly production. For us at CRKN, continuing to be involved in projects that are facilitating that and facilitating research output from Canadian scholars to be published in Canada is a really big goal of ours. So participating in the Coalition Publi.ca initiative—while not an outcome of IDSE—is very much a part of that concept of integration and of that broader ecosystem. CRKN works closely with the Association of Canadian University Presses because we have a license with them. We try actively to work together with Canadian publishers on this evolution and how can we create a system that's sustainable, that goes forward, that's good for the publishers, for the editors, for the journals, and also good for libraries who are trying to serve the end researcher.

ORCID is also very much of the benefit to the publishing community—take [Canadian Science Publishing](#) for example, if you publish in one of their journals you need to have an ORCID. How can we be working together to advance our common objectives? I think that's *collaboration* and we're all about it. It can be a bit of a buzzword but it's more than a buzzword for us. We function that way for sure.

Milligan: What are the next steps for IDSE?

Appavoo: With Kim not actively managing this going forward, it's going to be a little bit project based, but I think a big step forward is going to be the integration of [Canadiana](#) with CRKN. We're in this merger, or *combination* rather than a merger. This is really a huge integration. It's a huge project that really is all about IDSE. It's about integrating libraries doing these spinoffs of two different things: they happened at very different times but evolved in very similar ways. The original [Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions](#) (CIHM), the precursor to Canadiana, grew in the same way as CRKN grew when it was originally the [Canadian National Site Licensing Project](#). So now we're able to bring those two things together. We're both content-focused organizations. Canadiana is about heritage content and CRKN is about large scale commercial content. But 85-90% of their funding was coming from CRKN members, from Canadian universities. So, the same institutions were funding two separate organizations with two separate infrastructures. How do we bring those together and be more effective? So that's a really big next step and activity right now. We have to get past the hurdles of the actual integration; and then, we will have the opportunity to think big or have a broader vision of digital scholarship in Canada, and what can we do and how can we work together with others, as a function of being more integrated is pretty exciting. It is an opportunity. That's our big next step. It's not necessarily called IDSE but it really is very much coming out of that thinking, that initiative, that initial push of our own mindset.

Works Cited

Edwards, P.N., et al. 2013. "Knowledge Infrastructures: Intellectual Frameworks and Research Challenges" Ann Arbor: Deep Blue. <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/97552>.

"Integrated Digital Scholarship Ecosystem (IDSE) Project." 2017. Canadian Research Knowledge Network. <https://www.crkn-rcdr.ca/en/integrated-digital-scholarship-ecosystem-idse-project>

Ridley, Michael, Clare Appavoo and Sabina Pagotto. 2015. "Seeing the Forest and the Trees: the Integrated Digital Scholarship Ecosystem (IDSE) Project of the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN." Association of College and Research Libraries Conference. http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org/acrl/files/content/conferences/confsandpreconfs/2015/Ridley_Appavoo_Pagotto.pdf

Search



Archives

Categories

[Community News](#)

[English](#)

[French](#)

[Observations](#)

scholarly communication / la communication
savante

SFU Library /
Bibliothèque

social media / les medias
sociaux

Tri-Agency / des trois
organismes

UK

UK / Royaume-
Uni

UNESCO

UVic
Libraries

Érudit



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

