The SSHRC Transformation Process: Canadian Investment in Human Science Research and Scholarship

Chair: Virginia Stead (OISE/University of Toronto)

Panelists ...

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Discussant ...

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Framing the Canadian Research Agenda:

SSHRC’s Ongoing Transformation as our Funding Compass

What is SSHRC?

http://www.sshrc.ca

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) is an arm's-length federal agency that promotes and supports university-based research and training in the social sciences and humanities. Created by an act of Parliament in 1977, SSHRC is governed by a 22-member Council that reports to Parliament through the Minister of Industry.

How does SSHRC spend our money?
SSHRC-funded research fuels innovative thinking about real life issues, including the economy, education, health care, the environment, immigration, globalization, language, ethics, peace, security, human rights, law, poverty, mass communication, politics, literature, addiction, pop culture, sexuality, religion, Aboriginal rights, the past, our future.

What issues belong on this list?

Road map for transforming SSHRC

Council acknowledges the national research community’s engagement in the future of SSHRC. Five priority areas have emerged from these consultations. SSHRC must:

- strengthen research foundations to intensify discovery and understanding;
- expand opportunities for learning through research;
- promote research interaction and knowledge mobilization through clustering of research efforts;
- enhance the mobility of researchers and their ideas; and
- provide leadership in promoting and mobilizing social sciences and humanities knowledge.

Brief to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Concerning the Transformation of SSHRC

June 29, 2004

Submitted by the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL)

www.carl-abrc.ca

In a world that is undergoing exponential rates of technological, political, social and cultural change, it is hard to understated the value of research in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

What are some examples of these changes?

Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities is not only of intrinsic value, but it is critical to the formulation of wise legislation and informed social policies.
Conversely the value of SSH research is greatly diminished if it does not benefit the society from which it draws its inspiration.

How might we identify these benefits?

What determines how these are distributed?

What are the policy implications?

Scholarly Communication

Scholarly communication may be understood as an iterative process where creative research in the academic milieu is built upon the fruits of existing research, and in turn forms part of the research corpus.

The assumption to date has been that as long as SSHRC supports excellent researchers and research projects, then the traditional scholarly communication system—peer-reviewed journals, scholarly conferences, academic books and textbooks, as well as the mass media, think tanks, and students—will take care of disseminating the research results.

Selected Recommendations

1. Support open access to research publications.

2. Create a national clearinghouse for research material.

3. Implement a national archive for social sciences and humanities data.

5. Encourage closer ties between researchers and other stakeholders.

7. Implement funding programs that support the dissemination of research to the public.

    ... another perspective ...

The Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI)

http://innovation.ca

CFI is an independent corporation created by the Government of Canada to fund research infrastructure.

The CFI mandate is to strengthen the capacity of Canadian universities, colleges, research hospitals, and non-profit research institutions to carry out world-class research and technology development that benefits Canadians.
CFI Mission and Mandate

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CFI Budget and Funding Formula

The CFI has a budget of $3.65 billion and funds up to 40 percent of a project’s infrastructure costs. These funds are invested in partnership with eligible institutions and their funding partners from the public, private, and voluntary sectors who provide the remaining 60 percent of a project’s cost. Based on this formula, the total capital investment by the CFI, the research institutions, and their partners, will exceed $10 billion by 2010.

CFI Benefits of Supporting Research

Support from the CFI enables institutions to set their own research priorities in response to areas of importance to Canada. This allows researchers to compete with the best from around the world, and helps to position Canada in the global, knowledge-based economy.

CFI support is intended to:

- strengthen Canada's capacity for innovation;
- attract and retain highly skilled research personnel in Canada;
- stimulate research training of young Canadians;
• promote networking, collaboration, and multidisciplinarity among researchers; and

• optimize research infrastructure within and among Canadian institutions.

**CFI’s Definition of Research Infrastructure**

Research infrastructure consists of the state-of-the-art equipment, buildings, laboratories, and databases required to conduct research.

In what ways is this definition:

• Inclusive? Exclusive?
• Appropriate? Inappropriate?
• Innovative? Reproductive?
• Visionary? Reactionary?

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE to SSHRC**  
http://www.research.utoronto.ca/SSHRC_institutional_response

**Summary Excerpts from May, 2004**

As the outcome of a consultation exercise that reached well over 500 scholars ... those specific initiatives that engaged the most positive response are:

• confederations of learning, perhaps in active collaboration with the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research;

• enriched and connected post-tertiary training environments, following the successful examples of NSF and CIHR;

• special support for new faculty;

• an option of small research grants based primarily on scholars’ track records, at such time as this can occur without reducing the support of the SRG and in a fashion that does not reduce funding available to graduate students;

• an increase in funds available to institutions, to be used for increased communication (a.k.a. knowledge mobilization) ....
In addition to these specifics, we encourage SSHRC to re-position its stated focus on “new knowledge” toward the complementary priorities of cultural stewardship and knowledge production.

We urge SSHRC to look for ways to:

(1) increase international engagement,

(2) measure “impact” as it seeks to strengthen it, and

(3) celebrate diversity through its language, its research methods and the purposes that characterize the humanities and social sciences.

At [http://www.sshrc.ca/web/whatsnew/initiatives/transformation](http://www.sshrc.ca/web/whatsnew/initiatives/transformation), the 2004 SSHRC reform document asks,

“What importance do you attach to SSHRC investing in the full value chain of research – from the most upstream to the most downstream, from the most foundational to the most applied, from the most disinterested (knowledge for knowledge’s sake) to the most market- or client-driven, and from knowledge creation to knowledge brokering and mobilization?”

Our sense is that scholars at the University of Toronto do not identify with this language (2004, 12).

We acknowledge the perceived need to identify “exciting new initiatives” in the context of lobbying the federal government, but we tapped no sense of urgency that SSHRC should insert itself into the “most market- or client-driven” topics.

We value the role of SSHRC as our nation’s most powerful advocate on behalf of new knowledge and understanding through scholarship in the humanities and social sciences.

The transformation document leads readers to worry that SSHRC might be abandoning this role, in search of “the new.”

Our world is changing at an increasingly rapid pace, and scholars need to be flexible and adept, to change with it. The sense of our consultation is that the way to be swift and flexible in response is to be vigilant and lean.

That is, SSHRC should avoid additional large scale targeted initiatives that tie up a large proportion of our community in topics that may be shifting by the time the structure is in place.