



Improving Canada's Digital Advantage: A Digital Economy Strategy for Canada

Submission to Consultation

**The Canadian Urban Libraries Council /
Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada**

July 7, 2010

INTRODUCTION

For more than 35 years, the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) / Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada (CBUC) has worked, under a variety of names, to improve public library service in Canada's urban areas serving populations of more than 100,000.

CULC/CBUC members collectively serve more than 7.5 million active library users who annually make more than 435 million uses in our 522 locations and through our virtual networks. In 2009 we loaned more than 182 million items; served more than 120 million electronic visitors through electronic databases; virtual visits and questions; and expended \$86 million on collections including \$9 million on digital resources. More than 50% of all Canadians are served by CULC/CBUC member libraries and the activity in CULC/CBUC libraries comprises more than 80% of Canada's annual public library activity. Public Library web-sites are among the most visited in Canada.

Public libraries have been quantified as one of the best investments that government can allocate public dollars. A metric that is often pointed to is that for every \$1 allocated to public libraries the community achieves a return on that investment of between \$3 and \$6.50. (Source: "Public Libraries". Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences (ELIS) Third Edition, 2009-2010.).

CULC/CBUC works collaboratively to build vibrant urban communities by strengthening the capacity of Canada's urban libraries. Our association has an agenda that focuses on research, capacity building, knowledge transfer and exchange, and organizational resiliency.

CULC/CBUC shares a range of concerns regarding the development of a digital economic strategy for Canada with such related groups as the Canadian Library Association (CLA), the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL), the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN), and the Media Awareness Network of Canada. Many of these will have also submitted responses to the Consultation.

The Canadian Urban Libraries Council applauds the Government of Canada for initiating this consultation and is pleased to offer this response to the questions posed in the Consultation Paper *Improving Canada's Digital Advantage* which relate to the work of Canadian urban public libraries and the mandate of CULC/CBUC.

I. CAPACITY TO INNOVATE USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Consultation Questions

- *Which conditions best incent and promote adoption of ICT by Canadian businesses and public sectors?*
- *What would a successful digital strategy look like for your sector? What are the barriers to implementation?*
- *Once anti-spam legislation and privacy and copyright legislation are in place, are there new legislative or policy changes need to deal with emerging technologies and new threats to the online marketplace?*

Innovation in the development, application and commercialization of digital technologies will benefit more effectively from a solid national infrastructure which focuses on fast, efficient and seamless access, content creation and digital skills development. Just as in the past where the role of government has been to build and maintain a national transportation infrastructure, the role of the government now must continue to be to provide a robust public digital infrastructure to support Canada's national development. Assuring and building the basics will mean that any Canadian will have the ability to move from idea to reality wherever they work, live, create and play.

Ubiquitous internet access and basic digital literacy skills are essential for both the private and public sectors to conduct business and provide services online. As an example, for an urban public library this means providing users speedy access to digital content housed both locally and world-wide, streamlining operations through the use of RFID (radio frequency identification) tagging and reducing operational costs using e-commerce solutions for the collection of fees and fines. It also means the continued and strengthened provision of free public internet access and the offering of ICT content creation and skills instruction and courses for both individuals and groups in a public library setting.

Access for all: A new study on the American public benefits from internet access at U.S. libraries documents the central role modern libraries play in a digital society. The internet has become an important community resource. Internet access, the study reveals, is one of the most sought after public library services and is used by nearly half of its visitors. Libraries offer a technological lifeline to children and families in need. People of all ages, incomes, races and levels of education go to the library for internet access, whether they have a connection at home or not. Technology draws teens to the safe nurturing environment of the library. Overall the study shows, people use library computers to perform both life changing and routine tasks. In extreme conditions (such as Hurricane Katrina), people turned to public library Internet terminals when they had nowhere else to go. Additionally people use computers to help others in their communities. Public libraries provide access to government agencies that increasingly offer many forms and services online. Public libraries are extensions of the nation's education system. Librarians enhance the computing and internet experience. Over two thirds of people who use library computers, received help from library staff or volunteers on computer or wireless network issues.

In the study, library users reported using computers and the Internet to address a range of basic needs: the four most common were social connections, education, employment and health. The study concludes with the assertion that the wiring of public libraries has transformed one of the nation's most established community resources into a critical digital hub, where users can compete more effectively for jobs, improve their health, find key government services and manage their finances. (*Opportunity for All, 2010*. p 1-11)

A growing user group in many large Canadian public libraries are urban Aboriginals who have left their First Nations communities either temporarily or permanently. The public library can and does provide important support to help this group access the skills and resources to better enable them to function in a digital, urban environment.

Copyright: CULC/CBUC subscribes to the Canadian Library Association's position on copyright and supports its initial analysis of Bill C-32. We are concerned that the bill, as written is not as balanced as it could be. We appreciate the expansion of fair dealing and with some important modifications to the provisions on digital locks this bill addresses a number of the concerns brought forward by librarians across the country.

Bill C-32 gives users some new rights but longstanding rights, the heart of copyright's balance, as well as the new rights, are all tempered by the over-reach of digital locks.

In essence, the bill protects digital locks so they cannot be circumvented for legal uses. The government has, perhaps unwittingly, placed a barrier to the bill's achievement of its objective to promote innovation and support culture, by prohibiting Canadians from exercising their legitimate, statutory rights to copy material for research, study and education. It seems a fundamental oddity and contrary to good public policy that, essentially a right of access is given ONLY if it is OK with an individual rights holder. And of course, the individual rights holder's withholding their OK is dependent on their having sufficient financial or technological resources to digitally lock their information

Fortunately, this can be corrected by simply allowing circumvention of digital locks for legal purposes.

The bill's attempt to be technologically neutral appears to be incomplete, leaving parts of the Copyright Act still based on various media. CULC/CBUC is asking for format neutral language to facilitate the library's role in providing access and in preserving Canada's cultural heritage.

E-commerce in Canada can be promoted by the continuing development of broadband networks to which even small business and public libraries can link and which provide robust security features, standards for which should be developed by the government in consultation with stakeholders.

2. BUILDING A WORLD-CLASS DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Consultation Questions

- *What speeds and other service characteristics are needed by users and how should Canada set goals for next generation networks?*
- *What steps must be taken to meet these goals? What are the appropriate roles of stakeholders in the public and private sector?*
- *How best can we ensure that rural and remote communities are not left behind in terms of access to advanced networks and what are the priority areas for attention in these regions?*

Broadband networks: Large urban public libraries and their users depend upon wide bandwidth networks that are fast, dependable and secure. The amount of digital content that must be moved is increasing rapidly and our members report a growing frequency of bursting beyond bandwidth capacity on any given day. The network on which this content is moved must be constantly upgraded to the latest standards. New network tools and services are also needed. We join with CARL in encouraging the government to continue to fund CANARIE as a key component of the Canada's national digital infrastructure.

While there is currently sufficient access in most large metropolitan urban areas, cities are also places where the economically disadvantaged, new Canadians and people who require special needs and services tend to reside. These Canadians cannot afford broadband access, even when it is physically available. For a digital economy to thrive, many urban residents need high speed internet access in public places.

While CULC/CBUC is primarily focused on urban centres, several members incorporate large rural components (e.g. Ottawa, Halifax) within their jurisdictions. High quality networks must reach even small communities. It is imperative that access to these networks be affordable to small municipalities including their libraries and small businesses and organizations. Setting performance ceilings is not the right approach: government actions and policies supporting a new digital strategy should simply strive for unlimited bandwidth supporting instantaneous access for all Canadians

As Canada, including all levels of government, educational institutions and businesses adopt more digital solutions, more Canadians will turn to public libraries for assistance. Libraries offer direction, assistance and access to the technologies that Canadians require for learning and living, including access to such key areas of health information, education and employment information. It is rare that Canadians who most need this access have sufficient skills or technology at home.

The Community Access Program (CAP) is an example of a successful broad-based broadband initiative that needs to evolve. With secure funding this evolved service can further address both broadband access and digital literacy strategies.

GROWING THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY

Consultations Questions

- *What efforts are needed to address the talent needs in the coming years?*

Government as model ICT user: The consultation document highlights the need for governments to act as model ICT users. For this to become a reality there needs to be an equal emphasis on the ability of consumers to access government services. This will require model agreements with Canada's public libraries to ensure that Canadians can receive the services they require and deserve. Therefore Canada's digital strategy must address both the services that are delivered and the ability of Canadians to access these services. The government's Community Access Program (CAP) which offers support for those Canadians without home broadband access, must evolve and be assured of secure funding. Any evolution should incorporate and leverage the nation's network of public libraries as geographically representative, secure community institutions as the central feature of the program.

Basic literacy and numeracy: CULC/CBUC also encourages the government to support basic literacy and numeracy in Canada. Canada's public library network plays a major and growing role in the acquisition of both general literacy and digital literacy skills. For many, the local public library provides the only effective computer and Internet access individuals have; library staff provide a wide and growing range of instruction on computer use, online navigation, resource discovery and evaluation of information. This work should be supported by an expansion and evolution of the CAP program.

3. DIGITAL MEDIA: CREATING CANADA'S DIGITAL CONTENT ADVANTAGE

Consultation Questions

- *What does creating Canada's digital content advantage mean to you?*
- *What elements do you believe are necessary to encourage the creation of digital media and content in both official languages and to reflect our Aboriginal and ethno-cultural communities?*
- *How do you see digital content contributing to Canada's prosperity in the digital economy?*
- *What kind of hard and/or soft infrastructure investments do you foresee in the future? What kinds of infrastructure will you need in the future to be successful at home and abroad?*
- *How can we ensure that all Canadians, including those with disabilities (learning, visual, auditory) will benefit from and participate in the Canadian digital economy?*

Advantage through access and creation: For the users of Canada's urban libraries, the digital content advantage includes the dual and complementary concepts of access and creation. Canadians at large would benefit from being able to find online any and all federal government publications, both current ones on their original departmental websites and preserved documentation that may be kept in a "trusted digital repository" such as that being developed the Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

Heritage access: The digital content advantage also includes the strengthened access to and acceleration creation of digitized Canadian heritage documentation at the national, provincial and most especially at the local level. Once digitized, appropriately described, and placed online, the digital versions of heritage documents will be more easily found and conveniently accessed by researchers (of any age), teachers, students, writers, film-makers, authors etc. This vastly greater availability and use of our documentary heritage in its digital form will do much to increase knowledge about Canada, enhance national pride, and facilitate cultural creation. While digitization is not inexpensive, money spent on digitization in Canada, however flows primarily back into the Canadian economy through employment, increased creation of cultural products, better access for persons living with disabilities and increased tourism.

Digital Creation: An exciting project in digital creation can be found at the Chicago Public Library in the form of its YOU Media digital media space for teens. This innovative new learning space supports critical thinking, creativity and skills building. It is a space where in the vernacular teens can hang out, mess about and geek out. The space also includes books and other form of the printed word and circulation of these items has soared along with the success of YOU Media. This could be replicated in every large urban library system.

Investment in ICT infrastructure: CULC/CBUC recommends that the government invest in the ICT infrastructure in the following areas:

- ✓ Build literacy and digital skills in the Canadian labour force through training programs and through leveraging partnerships in the Canadian library community
- ✓ Encourage the development of standards and policies at national and international levels to build support for access and resources for persons living with disabilities into the production process from the beginning. In particular, the government should confirm long term support for IELA (Initiative for Library Access) being led by Library and Archives Canada in partnership with the Canadian library and producer community.
- ✓ Ensure that not-for-profit organizations (e.g. CNIB) that provide services for persons with disabilities are well supported.
- ✓ Play a role in ensuring that Canada's libraries in both a public and educational setting have appropriate computing hardware and software so that library clients with disabilities are able to use and benefit from the library and internet content available to other Canadians
- ✓ Support the continuing development of the national research network CANARIE
- ✓ Support the digitization of Canadian content as an element of the country's research, educational and creative infrastructure

4. BUILDING DIGITAL SKILLS FOR TOMORROW

Consultation Questions

- *What do you see as the most critical challenges in skills development for a digital economy?*
- *What is the best way to address these challenges?*
- *What can we do to ensure that labour market entrants have digital skills?*
- *What is the best way to ensure the current workforce gets the continuous up-skilling required to remain competitive in the digital economy?*
- *How will the digital economy impact the learning system in Canada?*
- *What strategies could be employed to address the digital divide?*

Formal and informal skills development: CULC/CBUC believes that the most critical challenges in skills development for a digital economy is the full inclusion of digital skills and literacy programs in both formal and informal education streams and sectors. Of particular critical importance is the removal of structural and social barriers to employment of skilled immigrants by increasing opportunities for developing and using ICT skills. Many public libraries are working closely with the department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada to provide newcomer orientation and integration programs. ICT training should be expanded to be a key part of this program.

The government should find appropriate ways to work with the library community to ensure that digital skills are systematically taught to and practiced by students from as early an age as possible and extended into all facets of life. This should include the development of digital creation labs to support life long learning, exploration, resource discovery, exchange of ideas and community engagement in Canada's digital future.

5. CONCLUSION

- *Should we set targets for our made-in Canada digital strategy?*

Canada should set targets around such economic strategy elements such as the proportion of Canadians who have effective access to broadband internet @100%; the number of pages of Canadian heritage content that is digitized and made effectively available each year; the number of open access digital laboratories available for content creation; the number of public libraries providing broad band and wireless Internet access (100%) etc.

Since 2017 is the 150th anniversary of Confederation, the achievement of a set of digital strategy targets would be a goal worthy of celebration that year.

CULC/CBUC urges the Government of Canada to use the network of public libraries in Canada, particularly those in metropolitan areas with their unprecedented and incomparable reach into the communities they serve, to assist in improving Canada's digital advantage.

CULC/CBUC RECOMMENDATIONS – A REVIEW

Capacity to Innovate

CULC/CBUC encourages the government to:

- allow the circumvention of digital locks for legal purposes in Bill C-32.
- adopt format neutral language in Bill C-32 to facilitate the public library's role in providing access and in preserving Canada's cultural heritage.
- develop standards for robust security features that all can use for e-commerce, including public libraries.

Building World-Class Digital Infrastructure

CULC/CBUC encourages the government to:

- continue to fund CANARIE as a key national digital infrastructure component.
- expand and support, in every way possible, high-speed Internet access in public places including the expansion of public library nodes of service.

Growing the ICT Industry

CULC/CBUC encourages the government to:

- develop model agreements with Canada's public libraries to ensure access to all government services
- to both expand and evolve the Community Access Program to ensure that it has a secure funding that addresses both broadband access and digital literacy strategies.
- be an active supporter of basic literacy and numeracy programs and strategies.

Canada's Digital Content Advantage

CULC/CBUC encourages the government to:

- encourage and continue support for the Libraries and Archives Canada "trusted digital repository" efforts
- invest in the ICT infrastructure in the following areas:
 - Build literacy and digital skills in the Canadian labour force through training programs and through leveraging partnerships in the Canadian public library community.
 - Play a role in ensuring that Canada's libraries in both a public and educational setting have appropriate computing hardware and software so that library clients with disabilities are able to use and benefit from the library and Internet content available to other Canadians.
 - Encourage the development of standards and policies at national and international levels to build support for access and resources for persons living with disabilities into the production process from the beginning.
 - Ensure that not-for-profit organizations that provide services for persons with disabilities are well supported.
 - Support the continuing development of the national research network CANARIE.
 - Support the digitization of Canadian content as an element of the country's research, educational and creative infrastructure.

Building Digital Skills for Tomorrow

CULC/CBUC encourages the government to:

- expand ICT training to newcomer orientation and integration programs. This builds on existing efforts that public libraries are involved with.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jefferson, Gilbert, Executive Director,
 Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) / Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada
 T: 416-699-1938 E : jgilbert@culc.ca

Mme Carole Laguë,
 Chair (2010-2012), Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) /
 Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada (CBUC)
 Et Chef de division
 Bibliothèque et lettres, Bibliothèque de Gatineau
 T: 819-243-2345 x2548 E: carole.lague@ville.gatineau.qc.ca

RESOURCES

Canadian Urban Libraries Council website
 Available at: <http://www.culc.ca>

Canadian Library Association website
 Available at: <http://www.cla.ca>

Chicago Public Library YOU Media Program
 Available at: <http://www.chipublib.org/aboutcpl/cplpr/2009/youmedia.php>

Government of Canada. Improving Canada's Digital Advantage – Strategies for Sustainable Prosperity. Consultation Paper on a Digital Economy Strategy for Canada, 2010.
 Available at: <http://ic.gc.ca/epublications>

IELA. Initiative for Equitable Library Access. Library and Archives Canada.
 Available at: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/iela/index-e.html>

Opportunity for All? How the American Public Benefits from Internet Access at U.S. Public Libraries. The U.S. Impact Study: A research initiative examining the impact of free access to computers and the Internet in Public Libraries. Institute of Museum and Library Services, (U.S.), 2010.
 Available at: <http://tascha.washington.edu/usimpact>

Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences, Third Edition (ELIS)
 Abstract available at: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=t917508581>

Taxpayer Return on Investment in Florida. Public Libraries: Summary Report. State Library and Archives of Florida: Tallahassee, FL, 2004.
 Available at: <http://dliis.dos.state.fl.us/bld/roi/pdfs/ROISummaryReport.pdf>