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The Changing Nature of Consortia: Building Serious Interdependence

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Harnessing innovation

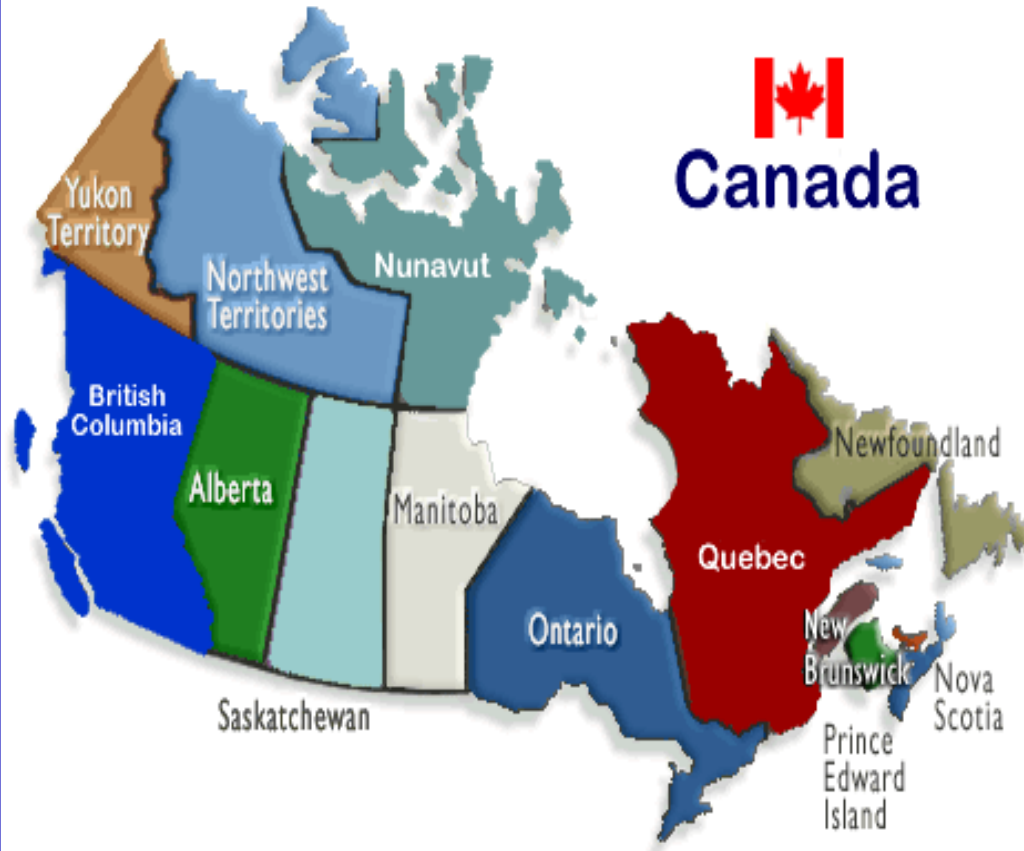


- Thomas Edison invented the incandescent light bulb in 1879
- BUT - it took another 50 years to harness the power of indoor electricity
- Deploying innovation required infrastructure
 - Creation of national electricity grid
 - Industries to generate electricity
 - Industries to manage and repair the grid

Harnessing digital innovation

- We are facing the same challenge in the digital age
- Bringing digital innovation to a broad public requires physical and organizational infrastructure
 - Technology
 - Policy
 - Cross-sector collaboration
 - Long-term investments

Canada: a nation of regions



- Population: 32 million
- Government: federal, provincial/territorial & municipal
- No national funding authority for education
- Federal research granting councils
- Political agenda for innovation

University libraries

- University community nation-wide:
 - Less than 100 universities
 - Approx. 800,000 professors & students
- Strong tradition of library resource sharing
 - overcome the “tyranny of distance”
 - make scarce resources go farther
 - **seize new opportunities through new enterprises**

Consortia in Canada

- Development of local, provincial, regional, multi-regional consortia
- Response to scalability challenges
- Focus on electronic resources
 - Discovery, requesting, delivery systems
 - Content licensing
 - Most programs have maintained institutional status quo - missions and processes

Base assumptions

- Research is undergoing fundamental change
 - holistic and interdisciplinary
- Our collections are inadequate
- Our resources are underutilized
- Our ability to predict & anticipate researchers' needs is seriously flawed
- Our spending & efforts are fragmented
- Status quo is not an option

Transformational change



“When simple change becomes transformational change, the desire for continuity becomes a dysfunctional mirage.”

Hawkins & Battin, *The Mirage of Continuity*,
1999

Partnerships: more than passion

“A wedding anniversary is the celebration of love, trust, partnership, tolerance and tenacity. The order varies for any given year.”

-Paul Sweeney

Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN)

- Partnership of 72 Canadian universities
 - not-for-profit corporation
- A voice within the national agenda
 - research content *IS* infrastructure
 - equitable access to research content is essential public policy
 - libraries are central to a thriving knowledge-based society

CRKN Mission



To enable interdisciplinary and innovative research in Canada

- through systematic, coordinated and national access to the best of global knowledge
- through coordinated leadership of university librarians, researchers, and administrators

CRKN Objectives

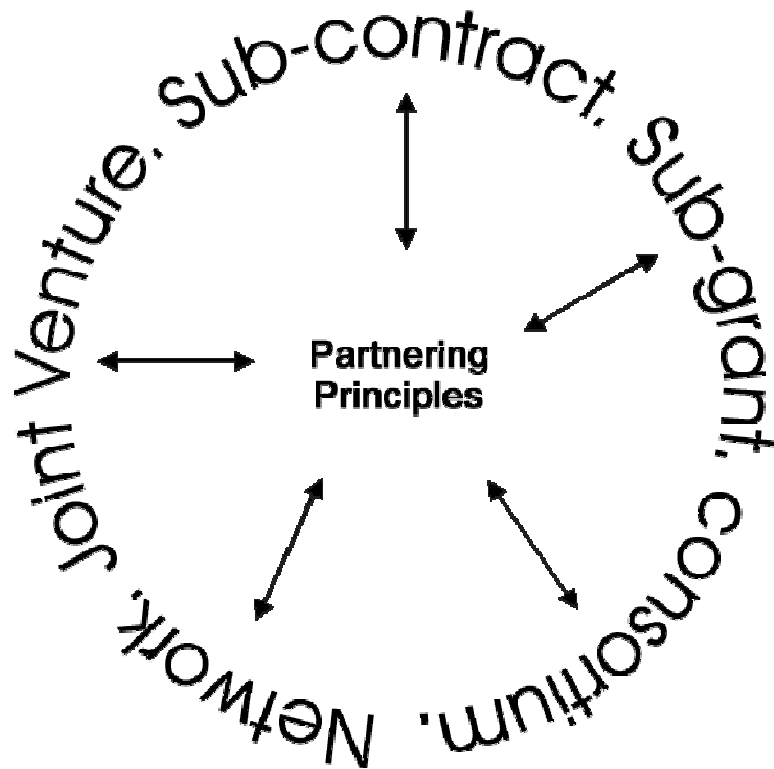
- **Expand** the research content available to researchers nation-wide
- **Speed** transition to digital materials & value-added forms of content, and **maximize its value** through networked access
- **Leverage** the buying power and influence of Canadian universities

Partnership Organization Model

*Partnership is a **relationship** that results from putting in practice a set of principles that create trust and mutual accountability*

- shared vision, values, objectives, risk, benefit, control & learning
- joint contribution of resources
- degree of **interdependence** is unique to each relationship, depends on context, and evolves over time

Soccer ball analogy



- Partnerships can have different outer structures
- Partnership principles are the "air" within
- Partnership is a matter of degree:
 - ball will expand or contract depending on the degree to which the partnership principles are being practiced in the relationship

Partnering Principles

- Ensure participation
- Define & build relationships
- Create new value
- Achieve accountability

The CRKN Partnership

- **We share vision**
 - We construct a collaborative response to need & opportunity
- **We share a voice within the national agenda**
 - Research content IS infrastructure
 - Equitable access to research content is essential public policy
 - Libraries are central to a thriving knowledge-based society
- **We share expertise**
 - We will demonstrate “proof of concept” and apply learning to future work
- **We share power**
 - We will create new models and new value

Strategies for success

- **Move from “problem-driven” to “vision-driven”**
 - problems = catalyst ; vision = commitment
 - seek broad agendas & build agreement on big issues
 - “leveling the playing field” vs. “raising the bar”
- **Focus on collaboration, not merely cooperation**
 - look beyond institutional self-interest
 - extend reach & impact, not cut costs
 - define relationships & build trust through pilot projects

Strategies for success [cont.]

- **Implement organizational & operational structures**
 - formal agreement(s) on how to work together
 - Decision making
 - Communications
 - Conflict resolution
 - Financial accountability
 - Administrative responsibility
 - Reporting to the community or constituency
 - Sustainability: post-project or post-relationship

Strategies for success [cont.]

- **Build consensus**
 - value disagreements
 - avoid thinking in terms of win-lose
 - use small groups to mobilize large group
 - articulate agreement / decisions clearly & often
- **Pay attention to transparency & accountability**
 - “goodness” is not self-evident
 - demonstrate return on investment

Strategies for success [cont.]

- **Risk reduction is good for all parties**
 - encourages movement & shift in business practices
- **There are always unintended consequences**
 - no single answer
 - adopt complementary strategies; experiment; build alliances

Why collaborations fail

- Fatal assumptions
 - the initiative is easy, self-evident, a no-brainer
- Underestimate complexity (non-systems thinking)
- Risk aversion confused with risk mitigation
- Lack of change management knowledge or skills; change structures missing
- Distrust of business mindset
- Lack of accountability
- Lack of follow-through & reinforcement of early successes – “killed by success”

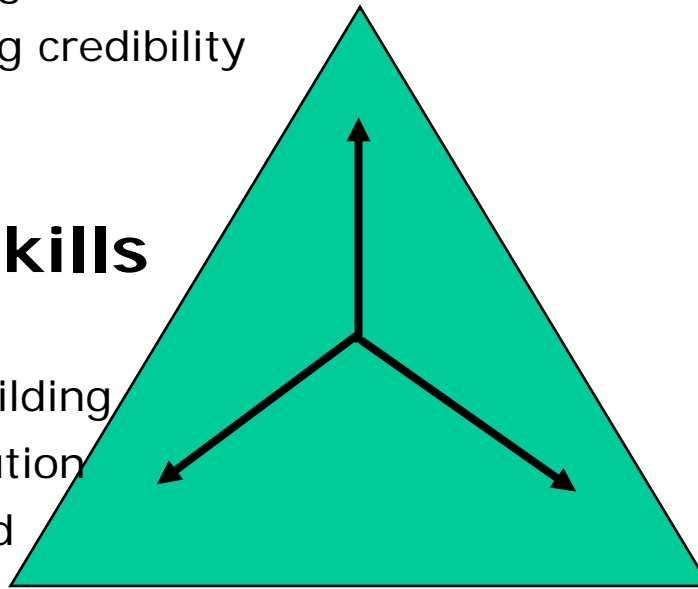
Help Wanted: Skills that Advance Collaboration

Political skills

Advocacy, ambassadorship
Cultivating opportunities;
anticipatory mindset
Building alliances
Building credibility

People skills

Facilitation
Consensus building
Conflict resolution
Interest-based
negotiations
Group motivation



Business skills

Legal & fiduciary
Financial management
Project management
Procurement practices
Business analysis
Business case development
Entrepreneurship
Risk management
Strategic communications
Evaluation
Statistical analysis

Emerging issues for consortia

- **Large-scale integration with information technology initiatives**
 - Federated identity management and authentication systems, course management systems, etc.
 - Development of tools and services layers
- **Large-scale curation of primary data**
- **Open Access**
 - We know how to make investment decisions as consumers
 - We need tools and policies for due diligence as investors
- **Community building through participatory media**

Final thoughts...



Thank you



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