



CERC
Canadian Educational
Resources Council

Supporting Canada's Learners in the 21st Century

Input to the Consultation on
Improving Canada's Digital Advantage

by

Canadian Educational Resources Council

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The Canadian Educational Resources Council (CERC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Digital Economy Consultation.

CERC is the trade association of the major publishers of educational resource materials for the Kindergarten to Grade 12 market in Canada. Our members design, publish and market specifically Canadian materials, to meet provincial curriculum requirements across Canada. Our members' learning materials can be found in every school board in Canada and account for approximately 80% of the curriculum-based learning resources used in Canadian schools.

CERC has a strong interest in the themes identified in the consultation paper. However, at this time, we have chosen to focus on what the paper describes as "Creating Canada's Digital Content Advantage", structuring our brief in the form of responses to several of the discussion questions provided in the consultation paper on that theme. We look forward to having opportunities to participate in continuing discussion of this important subject.

What are the core elements in Canada's marketplace framework for digital media and content? 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 ethnocultural communities?

While most of CERC's member firms have long been associated with the production of high quality learning materials in print format, it is a common misconception that education publishers are involved in producing print textbooks exclusively.

Education publishers are about more than print textbooks: in fact, our industry sees its unique expertise and key value-added as residing in the development and organization of content in ways that effectively support learning (whether that content is delivered to the student in print or via another format or medium). While it is still the case that the majority of student learning resources in use today are in the print format, we see a transition unfolding in Canada's education systems -- a transition toward an ever greater role for digital material in schools - - a transition in which we believe our industry will be expected to play a crucial role.

For Canada's education publishers, the marketplace framework for digital media and content is Canada's K-12 school system. The ministries of education are responsible for setting the curriculum for the K-12 schools in their provinces and setting the funding formulas for the school boards. In order to support the delivery of the curriculum set by the ministries, education publishers – through a variety of processes – develop and test learning resources tailored to the specifics of each province's curriculum. These resources are subjected to and

must meet rigorous criteria in terms of their Canadian content, the appropriateness of that content for the age and reading level of those students for whom it is intended, etc.

In developing the highly specialized and targeted learning resources that Canadian education systems have come to expect of them, CERC member firms invest in research and development, engage teachers to create, review and test the learning resources, resources that are made available in both official languages and which consistently reflect our Aboriginal and ethnocultural communities.

For some time now, the educational resources developed by our members have included an increasing proportion of on-line and digital components. As education publishers develop products and delivery mechanisms to serve the growing demand for online digital educational resources in Canada's schools, the Internet will play an increasing role as a channel for the delivery of our members' products and services. These products and services will be accessed by students and teachers using a variety of digital platforms.

In order to be successful in its ongoing efforts to serve the Canadian education system with learning resources that are matched to curriculum and that make use of new technologies, Canada's education publishing enterprise sees several elements as crucial. These include:

- *a planned and sequenced transition* towards greater use of digital resources in Canada's schools, thereby allowing Canada's educational publishing enterprise to remain viable through the period of transition.
- *focused leadership* among key decision makers when it comes to fostering the transition to digital in Canada's education systems
- identification of suitable parameters of *an e-resource business model* that works for (buyers and sellers in) the education marketplace

Among our concerns is that -- for want of a clearly articulated plan for this transition -- one unintended consequence may be the severe diminution of Canada's capacity to generate the sorts of student resources that schools will want and need. We seek to encourage and engage in discussions with Canada's education decision makers about how they wish to see curriculum resourced in the future and how we can ensure that Canada's schools have access to the kinds of learning resources that they will need in the future.

Canada's Digital Strategy should provide opportunities for the developers of educational resources to work with the Ministries of Education to develop a shared understanding regarding the future policies and processes most appropriate for sustaining the Canadian education system's capability to ensure that students are adequately supplied with high quality learning resources.

How can we ensure that all Canadians, including those with disabilities (learning, visual, auditory), will benefit from and participate in the Canadian digital economy?

Education publishers – indeed publishers in general – have played an active role in a variety of efforts aimed at developing an accessible information and communication standard to ensure that all Canadians, including those with disabilities (learning, visual, auditory), will benefit from and participate in the Canadian digital economy. Indeed, the increasingly digital format of our learning resources will make them more accessible to those with special needs.

CERC members have long supported initiatives to meet the needs of Canadians with print disabilities. They do this directly on a daily basis, by supplying e-files to accredited students. They also work with educational organizations and non-profits such as the CNIB. More recently, they have been charter participants in the E-Text Clearinghouse, operated by Library and Archives Canada. Senior executives of our member companies serve on government, non-profit and charity boards and committees devoted to ensuring equitable access.

Policies that encourage the growth and development of Canada's educational publishing enterprise will benefit all Canadians, including those with disabilities (learning, visual, auditory).

How does CERC see digital content contributing to Canada's prosperity in the digital economy?

The key elements for success as outlined above actually transcend the K-12 sector and education publishers' role therein. Canada's success in making effective links between new technologies and learning will be fundamental to the future wealth-generating capacity of this country. Accordingly, it makes sense that this particular area should be given priority for research and innovation in Canada's Digital Strategy.

Canada is blessed with a strong and innovative educational resource industry. Fully eighty per cent of the materials used in our classrooms are written and produced in Canada. Our students are consistently near the top in international educational performance scores. Our education system has long been recognized for its sound curricula, strong teaching and rich learning resources. When it comes to developing and integrating digital resources into our schools, it

will take vision, investment and sound public policy to transform our classrooms. Canada's education publishers expect to play a key role in that transformation.

How can stakeholders encourage investment, particularly early stage investment, in the development of innovative digital media and content?

Canada's Digital Strategy needs to establish conditions that will encourage the investment needed to develop the Canadian learning resources of the future is vital. These conditions include:

- predictability and stability in Canada's education marketplace,
- stimulus for research and innovation that explores the best ways to utilize technology in support of learning,
- policies that encourage the emerging vision of 21st century learning in Canada and that
- provision of practical support to Canada's education system in the implementation of that vision.

Given such conditions, educational publishers in Canada will have an opportunity to build on their existing strength and to avoid mistakes that have been made in other jurisdictions.

Clearly, a cornerstone of a public policy regime that would encourage investment in the development of intellectual property is a copyright act that provides adequate protection for those taking the risk, thereby ensuring they have an opportunity to recover the investment.

Developers of intellectual property -- whether that property is in print format or digital format -- need the confidence to innovate that copyright provides. This can best be provided by an Act that creates conditions in which rights holders are assured of a reasonable return for their investments, and users are provided with appropriate channels of access. The language of such an Act should be clear in allowing market forces to shape the business models through which intellectual property will be disseminated. Policies that encourage investment and innovation by the developers of Canada's educational resources will bode well for greater

access and choice for teachers and — for the primary beneficiaries — the students in Canada’s schools.

Therefore, we have a keen interest in seeing copyright reformed in ways that are both robust enough and sufficiently flexible to address the issues in today’s world as well as the issues that are sure to present themselves in the world that is evolving. CERC will continue to play an active role in current efforts to modernize the Canadian copyright regime to ensure that it achieves the government’s stated goal of supporting “creativity and innovation in the knowledge economy.” It is our belief that the latest proposed amendments – in the form of Bill C32 – fall considerably short in this regard. Unless modified, the provisions of this bill would effectively impede development of the new business models needed to ensure that Canada’s learners have access to high quality Canadian digital learning resources

Looking Forward:

Education publishers will provide students and teachers across Canada with many opportunities to effectively address learning in the 21st century. Our resources have always been an important part of the learning process and will continue to play such a role in the future. As educational content becomes richer, more interactive, and more data driven, and as systems are put in place to help educators make more effective use of content, we will be serving teachers and students with new approaches to teaching and learning.

To the extent that Canada’s Digital Strategy results in a supportive climate, the scale of our members’ collective investments in technology and services will enable them to anticipate and develop many of the components, capabilities and platforms that will support Canadian learners. Canadian education is poised on the threshold of an exciting new era. Canada’s education publishers stand ready to be flexible and creative partners in ushering in the new approaches that will secure – for Canada and for Canadians – a true digital advantage.