

Five Year Strategy from the SSHRC

By Jean-Claude Robert, CHA Council member responsible for SSFC-SSHRC-CFH

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council has recently published its five year plan (1990-1995) entitled *A Vision for the Future*. The proposal focuses on the Council's main objectives, priorities and projects. The plan is based on the importance of social science and humanities research in light of technological changes in Canadian society and the fundamental basis of the social sciences as part of a culture and a civilization. The Council's role is to support Canadian researchers in this key field.

Finance remains an important issue. Not only has the financing become stagnant during the last dozen years, but its share of the budget has eroded in comparison to the two other federal research granting councils. Between 1978 and 1990, the budget has increased only slightly in real dollars. As for the erosion of financing: SSHRC received 16% of funds allocated to all three councils (SSHRC, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Medical Research Council) in 1978-79 and only 12% in 1990-91. The majority of Canadian university researchers work in the social sciences and humanities fields. The Social Science Federation of Canada reports that in 1986-87, the distribution of full time university professors in Canada was as follows: 55% in the social sciences and the humanities, 28% in the natural sciences and engineering and 16% in the medical field. The tabled plan concludes its argument by stating that even though applications from researchers has increased in the last five years, the success rate for these requests has fallen dramatically.

The Council's three priorities for 1990-95 are:

1. To strengthen the social sciences and humanities through an increased investment in the training of the next generation of researchers.
2. To develop and promote research structures that will enhance research quality, productivity and relevance.
3. To find ways to enhance the communication of research results.

These priorities continue to build on the four specific objectives of the SSHRC which are: the advancement of knowledge, to support strategic research in fields of national importance, to ensure the

national capacity for research, and to promote awareness of research results. The Council is also reacting to two further issues which could increase the demand for new social science researchers. Firstly, there is the issue of an aging professoriate which could, if it goes unchecked, precipitate a recruiting crisis in Canadian universities at the beginning of the next century. Most will remember the 1960's when universities had to rebuild personnel pools. Secondly, the private sector is competing with universities for social science graduates. According to Statistics Canada, in 1971 social science and humanities graduates held 18% of the jobs in this sector. By 1978, this figure had risen to 35% and preliminary figures indicate an increase to 46% in 1989.

In order to fulfil its mandate and objectives based on these priorities, SSHRC maintains a variety of programmes in four categories: graduate support programmes; research grants programmes; communication of research programmes; the evaluation of its own programme performance.

In the first category, three sub-programmes cater specifically to students. The first one is the grants programme. The SSHRC would like to not only maintain its involvement in graduate studies, but also extend support to the master's level of studies. Presently the Council finances only 4.3% of students enrolled in social sciences and humanities full time - it envisions granting up to 10-15%. The second sub-programme would see the Council increasing the number of available post-doctoral grants. This would greatly assist in meeting the eventual shortage of professors which seems inevitable in a few years. Researchers, once trained, could perfect their skills within the university system. Lastly, the Council wants to develop new graduate co-operative programmes in conjunction with governments and the private sector. The programmes would include applied research or practical work experience.

The second group of programmes are research oriented. There are two already in place: the Research Grants Programme and the Strategic Grants Programme. A third and new research initiative, to promote and establish research centres and networks, will be added. The

Research Grants Programme has been subject to many changes lately: applicants will be ranked on the basis of their previous research achievements; research programmes will be allowed to extend over a certain period; a category of new researchers will be created, allowing them access and entry into the system; recognition of training opportunities for researchers within research teams; attention given to multidisciplinary projects. These new objectives are mainly to encourage new research practices: group research, mid-to-long term planning, allowing graduate students into established programmes, practising multidiscipline research.

The Strategic Grants Programme has three priorities of its own: the promotion of multidisciplinary research, research partnerships and joint initiatives for developing new themes. The definition of selection criteria for applications will take into account these new priorities.

The third and new Programme - promoting and establishing research centres and networks - would see the promotion of collaboration between institutions and the scientific sectors. It would stimulate synergy by supporting team research on major long-term projects or programmes.

The third group, Communication of Research Programmes has moved the Council in two directions. Firstly, the Council plans to develop a programme of international exchange and collaboration. This would stimulate exchanges between researchers and the creation of team projects. Secondly, SSHRC envisions developing communications not only between researchers and the public, but between universities and the Council itself and the public. It has already started to allow applications to include outlines for the communication of research results to others. It would also like to see university research administrators become more active in the communications process. As for the SSHRC itself, it will strive to develop an expanded communication plan to make audiences aware of research results generated by its financing and programmes.

The last initiative is a project designed to measure efficiency of its own programmes. In its conclusion, the strategic five year

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Guide to Canadian Reference Sources: A Progress Report

by Mary Bond

From the National Library Bulletin

The National Library of Canada is currently working on the *Guide to Canadian Reference Sources*. The guide will provide bibliographic information on Canadian reference sources in all subjects. A publication of this type has not been produced in Canada since *Canadian Reference Sources: A Selective Guide*, compiled by Dorothy E. Ryder and published by the Canadian Library Association in 1981. While Miss Ryder's work included approximately 2000 entries, the number in the new guide will increase to approximately 6000. This is largely as a result of the growth in Canadian reference publishing over the last ten years.

The structure of the guide will be similar to that of Miss Ryder's book, with entries arranged by discipline and subject. The range of subjects to be covered reflects changes in Canadian society and in Canadian Studies research as well as developments in science and technology. Individuals with disabilities, the aged, arms control and peace, folk art, sexuality, alternative medicine, bioethics, public health and computer science are among the subjects which will be added to the guide.

Canadian content or interest in a work, rather than Canadian authorship or publication, will be considered the most important selection criterion. Therefore, an American source such as *America, History and Life*, which is useful for the study of Canadian history, will be included. As well as works which are national in scope, a balanced selection of reference works which are of provincial, territorial or regional interest will be listed, when possible and appropriate, in each subject.

The guide will be bilingual and will provide complete bibliographic citations and annotations for every document listed. Its bibliographic style will conform to that of the *Bibliographic Style Manual* published by the National Library of Canada in 1990. Each annotation will include information on the frequency, contents, arrangement and indexing of the publication, the availability of microform, database, CD-ROM, braille or sound recording formats and a publishing history describing title changes and relationships with other documents. Four indexes are planned for the guide: author, title, English subject and French subject.

Although *Guide to Canadian Reference Sources* is several years from completion, the progress of the project has been aided

by the use of microcomputers and downloading technology. The compilers search for bibliographic records on DOBIS and transfer them to InMagic databases set up for the project. This process saves time because the compilers can concentrate on editing and annotating records rather than inputting them manually. Records printed from the databases are used as worksheets.

The National Library of Canada hopes that this guide will continue the valuable work begun by Miss Ryder. It will provide librarians and library users with a good knowledge of the range of excellent Canadian reference works available, in print and in other formats. It will also delineate subject areas in Canadian Studies for which reference works do not currently exist.

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plan reiterates the need for an increased budget in order to fulfil its mandate and projects.

Generally, the CHA agrees with the Council's orientation. Specifically, we are all acutely aware of the Council's financial needs - the level of financing for social science and humanities research is scandalous considering the objectives assigned to the field as opposed to those in other fields. We must however, raise certain questions. While we agree with the importance of graduate students grants, team research, mid-to-long term planning, training of researchers, communications strategies, etc., we must ask this question: are the demands of our discipline being well served by these varied programmes and by the general orientation being contemplated. In a recent analysis on the subject of "the search for excellence", Normand Séguin stresses the need for the scientific community to reflect upon the market's regulation of research. He illustrates that to a certain extent, universities, governments and researchers become part of a larger system which responds to its own requirements, has its own dynamics and its own constraints. [Normand Séguin "Excellence et développement scientifique:

le cas des humanités et des sciences sociales", *Interface*, 12, 1 (January-February 1991): 22-26].

On a more concrete level, we must also acknowledge that part of the Council's orientation leans towards a concentration of research resources - particularly the upcoming promotion and establishment of research centres and networks programme. In principal, the focus is not bad but it is imperative that we make certain that social science research grants in Canada are not monopolized by a small number of institutions or individuals and that the emergence of new research does not become an impossible mission. We cannot forget that research in the social sciences necessitates many different legitimate methods of work. For example, certain types of research are possible only on an individual basis and are based on long solitary reflections where large teams of assistants studying voluminous archives would not be beneficial.

Let me make this clearly understood: there must be room for individual and team research. However, what remains important in the final analysis, is the quality of the contributions to our knowledge.

In Memoria

Howard Palmer, member of the CHA since 1971 passed away earlier this year.

Eugene Forsey, writer and past member of Parliament, passed away. He was a member of the CHA since 1951 and an Honorary Life Member since 1971.