

Book and Periodical Council

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Canadian Content in a Digital World

Submission to Canadian Heritage

Prepared by the Book and Periodical Council

A. Introduction

The Book and Periodical Council (BPC), formed in 1975, is the umbrella organization for Canadian associations that are, or whose members are, primarily involved in the writing, editing, translating, publishing, producing, distributing, lending, marketing, reading and selling of written words. Our mandate is to cultivate an environment that supports a healthy and vibrant written-word sector in Canada by acting as a networking, advocacy and outreach forum for our members and as a hub for projects and initiatives that identify and address cultural, educational, economic, research and information needs and common goals across the industry. Our 33 members and affiliates collectively represent thousands of Canadians, organizations and businesses from coast to coast. The guiding philosophy behind the BPC is that what strengthens the industry as a whole strengthens each of its parts.

When it comes to the adoption of digital tools and technology by the cultural industry, Canada's writing and publishing sector is at the forefront. Technology is integral to the creation, production and dissemination of written content and is a focus for our sector. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to Minister Mélanie Joly's current consultations and look forward to working with Canadian Heritage staff over the long term to ensure that Canadians continue to have access to a diversity of Canadian written works in *all* formats – print, digital and audio.

B. Building a cultural system that supports creators and respects citizen choice

Increasingly, Canadians turn to digital platforms to seek out writing. Online book retailers such as Amazon, digital magazine subscription services such as Texture and Zinio, public library catalogues powered by OverDrive – digital platforms have become core to the discovery of Canadian content. In many cases, however, although research shows that Canadians want to read Canadian content, it is difficult to identify the Canadian material amid these platforms' vast offerings. BPC member organizations have created new discoverability platforms and have worked with a variety of vendors to improve discoverability of Canadian content for library borrowing and book buying, but much remains to be done. Marketing and promotion also make a difference, bridging the gap between writer and reader. When citizens can discover Canadian material, they are empowered to choose it.

C. Meeting the challenges of promoting Canadian creativity in the digital world and using Canadian content to promote a strong democracy

The printing press was the foundation of modern democracy, and reading and writing remain the cornerstone of our democracy today. Publishing allows for the exchange of ideas and information, for thoughtful debate and for improved understanding of and empathy for different points of view. A healthy writing and publishing ecosystem is essential to supporting diverse writing in a range of genres – from long-form writing on current issues to graphic fiction imagining a different future – to ensure that all Canadians, from children to decision makers, have access to the material they need to be active participants in our civil society.

A strong democracy also requires information and debate that are not always comfortable. Without freedom of information – both freedom of speech and access to information – our writing and reading culture is diminished; our democracy, the poorer. The BPC has been at the forefront of engaging the public in freedom of information issues, through our Freedom to Read Week program and the year-round work of our Freedom of Expression (FOE) Committee. The mandate of the FOE Committee is to monitor and oppose threats to free expression and to raise awareness around issues of censorship, intellectual freedom and access to books, magazines and writing in Canada. In 1984, the FOE Committee launched Freedom to Read Week, a unique annual program aimed at raising the public's awareness of these issues.

We all share responsibility for upholding Canadians' freedom to read and freedom of expression, which are essential to the health of both our cultural ecosystem and Canadian democracy.

D. Supporting Canada's writing, reading and publishing industry to create an ecosystem that thrives

The BPC membership represents Canada's writing and publishing ecosystem. From the writers who produce exciting new works to the librarians who pair those books with readers, we are an important component of Canadian culture. A healthy ecosystem that supports creators and serves consumers is one that both provides choice and ensures that rightsholders are compensated for their work.

Government investment in infrastructure should include support for cultural infrastructure, including both public and school libraries. Libraries are leading the charge in adoption and creative use of digital technology and content and need adequate resources to serve Canadians, including those in remote and Indigenous communities. Infrastructure to support the use and preservation of both print and digital content is essential. In the case of both libraries and archives, continued access to Canadian resources is needed to support the creation of new works.

Associations like the BPC and its members are another important component of this ecosystem. We connect industry actors to each other, serve as incubators for innovation, and support the creators and producers who keep Canadian writing and publishing vibrant. Many BPC members receive financial support from Canadian Heritage, for which we are grateful; however, the project-based nature of the support provided and the timelines under which funding is delivered often make it challenging for organizations to make long-term plans. Innovation knows no bounds, but it also does not operate on a fiscal year. Greater flexibility in grants and contributions to associations would support us in supporting our members – those creators and cultural businesses responsible for great Canadian content – and would strengthen our creative sector's culture of innovation.

We note the success of existing funding tools offered by Canadian Heritage, including the Canada Book Fund and the Canada Periodical Fund. These well-managed programs increase the capacity of book and magazine publishers to compete in a digital world and are an important component of our ecosystem.

Finally, we encourage the government to facilitate a full and thorough review of the *Copyright Modernization Act* in 2017, as mandated by law. Copyright is the foundation on which cultural industries are built, and the review of the *Act* must include both rightsholders and users of content.

E. Conclusion

A healthy digital future for Canadian written culture and knowledge requires a strong foundation: stable infrastructure to support diverse content and innovation; preservation of both digital and print content; and access, with lenses of discoverability, affordability and freedom of information. The Book and Periodical Council and its member organizations look forward to working with Canadian Heritage to build on past successes to ensure an ecosystem that continues to encourage Canadian writing, publishing and reading.

Book and Periodical Council Members (2016/17)

Access Copyright

Alberta Magazine Publishers Association

Association of Book Publishers of British Columbia

Association of Canadian Publishers

Association of Manitoba Book Publishers

Atlantic Publishers Marketing Association

BookNet Canada

Book Publishers Association of Alberta

Canadian Authors Association

Canadian Children's Book Centre

Canadian Copyright Institute

Canadian Publishers' Council

Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers

Editors Canada

League of Canadian Poets

Literary Press Group of Canada

Magazines Canada

National Reading Campaign

Ontario Book Publishers Organization

Ontario Library Association

PEN Canada

Periodical Marketers of Canada

The Word on the Street

The Writers' Union of Canada

Writers' Trust of Canada

Book and Periodical Council Affiliates

Accompass

Calyx Ground Transportation Solutions

Canpar Ground Transportation

Fraser Direct Distribution Services Ltd.

Marquis Book Printing

The Georgetown Group Ltd.

Universal Logistics Inc.

Webcom Limited