Canadian Federation of Library Associations /
Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques
(CFLA-FCAB)
National Forum Paper

Artificial Intelligence and Intellectual Freedom, Key Policy Concerns for Canadian Libraries

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The **Canadian Federation of Library Associations - Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques (CFLA-FCAB)** is the united, national voice of Canada's library community. As the national voice of Canada's library communities, CFLA-FCAB works to:

- advance library excellence in Canada;
- champion library values and the value of libraries; and
- influence national and international public policy impacting libraries and their communities.

Canadian libraries have the common mission of preserving and disseminating Canada's knowledge and heritage—a crucial component of an innovative, productive and forward-looking country. Our members also provide free access to the information and resources that many Canadians—especially those who face socioeconomic barriers—need to maximize their personal development and wellbeing and their contributions to the economy.

Authors

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Acknowledgements

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Finally, thank you to each person who participated and contributed in-person or remotely to CFLA-FCAB's first National Forum.

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2018 CFLA-FCAB National Forum

The National Forum brings together library leaders and stakeholders from Canada and beyond for the purposes of expanding knowledge, sparking ideas, building networks, and collaborating on issues that impact our sector.

The National Forum is a full day event focusing on critical issues affecting our the Canadian library community. It is designed to inform and engage with a focus on public policy development while identifying priorities for CFLA-FCAB. Active participation by members of our community is an essential aspect of this event and in ensuring CFLA-FCAB continues to be a member-driven, responsive organization.

CFLA-FCAB's goal is to hold the National Forum regularly in partnership with member library associations.

Bruce Walsh

The opening keynote of the inaugural CFLA-FCAB Forum was delivered by Bruce Walsh, Founding Director of the independent publisher [University of Regina Press](). Through his stories, Walsh described the impact we can have both individually and collectively when we are fearless, inquisitive, and provocative. He emphasized our responsibility to act and take action. He also demonstrated how important it is to regularly share our regional stories which give shape and direction to our national direction.

During an enthusiastic and lively presentation, Walsh introduced the audience to several books published by U of R Press by telling the stories within their pages. Titles ranged from cultural studies, including *Reading from Behind: A Cultural Analysis of the Anus* by Jonathan A. Allen, to bestsellers such as *The Education of Augie Merasty : A Residential School Memoir*, by Joseph A. Merasty with David Carpenter.

Walsh shared that his interest in Indigenous stories developed in part thanks to his arrival in Saskatchewan during the Oka Crisis, and that he became an activist on freedom of expression, joining an occupation in Victoria Park in Regina. Walsh felt there was "nothing more important that (he) could be working on than learning about Indigenous people" and wanted to tell stories people hadn't heard before.

The first book published by U of R Press was *Clearing the Plains : Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*, by James Daschuk, which Walsh said he chose to market as a 'big book' – as opposed to an academic work – allowing it to be offered to a larger audience. This has been his strategy to date, with positive results.

The University of Regina Press recently published its seventh national bestseller, *After the War : Surviving PTSD and Changing Mental Health Culture*, by Stéphane Grenier, with Adam Montgomery.

U of R Press also publishes a First Nations Language Reader series in which the books introduce an Indigenous language and demonstrates how each language is used today. The Press's long-term goal is to publish all 60+ Indigenous languages of Canada. Walsh noted that the loss of language is the ultimate attack on freedom of expression. With freedom of expression at the core of his work, Walsh describes his aim as making regional stories nationally important while fighting censorship and regionalism.

(CFLA-FCAB) National Forum Paper: Artificial Intelligence and Intellectual Freedom
Key Policy Concerns for Canadian Libraries

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Artificial Intelligence – Seize the Opportunity

Panel participants:
Brent Barron, Director, Public Policy, CIFAR (Canadian Institute for Advanced Research)
Scott Hargrove, CEO, Fraser-Valley Regional Library System
Danica Pawlick-Potts, MLIS student, Western University, current Co-op Librarian at University of Guelph
Michael Ridley, PhD Candidate in Artificial Intelligence, Librarian, Former Chief Information Officer and Chief Librarian, University of Guelph
Moderator: Rebecca Jones, Dysart and Jones Associates

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) has been compared to the introduction a century ago of electricity – capable of transforming every aspect of our lives. As AI advances, we are only just beginning to grasp the implications of its power.[1]

Mike J. Walker, Research Director with trend tracking firm Gartner, believes that "AI technologies will be the most disruptive class of technologies over the next 10 years due to radical computational power, near-endless amounts of data and unprecedented advances in deep neural networks."[2]

Here is a category of technology that is becoming more and more capable of understanding our information needs, and which we will need to embrace in order to fully uncover its true potential.

The Forum panel on artificial intelligence addressed changes that AI has brought and will continue to bring to society, and provided advice for CFLA-FCAB regarding positioning and policies for Canadian libraries. The session focused on the 'What?' and 'So what?' of Artificial Intelligence, while table discussions that followed focused on the 'Now what?'

The What:
Artificial intelligence can be defined as 'an intelligent agent that can take in the environment it is in and maximize a goal' (Brent Barron). Essentially, AI allows computer systems to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence. These tasks at their core involve prediction, on scale that is much faster and more efficient, and at least as accurate as, a human. Sometimes this involves an extremely large dataset; sometimes it involves "trial and error" for the machine to discover accurate prediction criteria.

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[1] Libraries in the Age of Artificial Intelligence, Ben Johnson, Information Today, January 2018
http://www.infotoday.com/cilmag/jan18/Johnson--Libraries-in-the-Age-of-Artificial-Intelligence.shtml

[2] Top Trends in the Gartner Hype Cycle for Emerging Technologies, 2017, Kasey Panetta, August 15, 2017
https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/top-trends-in-the-gartner-hype-cycle-for-emerging-technologies-2017/

Canadians are recognized leaders in the AI field, responsible in part for two major technologies associated with artificial intelligence. Deep learning, studied by Geoffrey Hinton of Google and the University of Toronto, gets its inspiration from neuroscience and includes visual perception and speech recognition. Reinforcement learning, introduced by Richard Sutton of the University of Alberta, focuses on decision-making by creating large pools of data and developing strategies from patterns that are identified. Facebook has established FAIR Montreal, a research lab headed by Joelle Pineau, a professor in McGill University's computer science department and co-director of Reasoning and Learning Lab.

The So What:

The panel warned of the downside of AI and potential risks, including human bias in programming and the potential for biases to be reinforced when AI systems were trained using sets of data.

One estimate is that 50% of jobs are going to vanish in the next 20 years (Scott Hargrove). Three sectors in the economy are expected to see growth: technology, social services and the creative industry. The latter two are activities that cannot be replicated by AI, and this means qualities that employers are looking for will likely change: judgement, emotional intelligence and artistic capabilities will become important and expensive. Libraries could play a role in helping their users transition to more stable job sectors.

Some current research has been directed towards openness in AI, such as open source code and making datasets widely available (Danica Pawlick-Potts). This topic intersects with areas that are important to libraries and patrons: privacy, consent, and appropriate use of data. Social institutions such as libraries can help keep datasets open to help prevent anti-competitive behaviour.

Another issue to be considered is algorithmic literacy (Mike Ridley): since AI involves a computer learning on its own, to humans it can seem analogous to a "black box." It is therefore important to understand how the decisions the machine is making can affect our lives. Libraries can help humanize and democratize the technology by helping with the "explainability" of AI algorithms. Libraries also have an interest in using AI to analyse and leverage their own usage data.

As integral parts of their communities, libraries need to be at the forefront in adapting systems and services to new technologies, some of which we have not yet imagined. Libraries can also play a part in advocacy for better privacy, regulation, and openness in relation to AI and the algorithms and datasets involved in training the machines. Already, libraries are looking to the European Union's *General Data Protection Regulation* with interest in applying something similar in North America. However, national positions on AI have thus far been primarily driven by what AI means for economic development. While there is agreement that AI will increase economic

efficiency and output, the income distribution problem as well as policies on how to implement AI must still be worked out.

Recommendations for CFLA-FCAB:
Panelists encouraged the library community to take a lead role in advocating for and playing a part in shaping discussions on artificial intelligence (Brent Barron), and to be involved in standards work such as IEEE working groups and the Standards Council of Canada . As Danica Pawlick-Potts observed, due to its interdisciplinary nature, AI requires collaboration and different perspectives, making it a perfect fit for libraries.

The panel also highlighted the need to incorporate AI into planning and recruitment, by focussing on algorithmic literacy. Within libraries, there are opportunities to develop new programs based on demographics, and help communities adapt to a world that is becoming increasingly tech-driven.

The Now What: Key takeaways from the day's table discussions
Working table discussions addressed:

Q1. How might libraries contribute to ensuring AI benefits our society (communities, campuses, and organizations), and to mitigating the risks?

Q2. How should CFLA-FCAB position libraries in Canada to be contributors to AI as a positive influence in our society (communities, campuses, and organizations?) And, who should CFLA-FCAB partner with or align with in this positioning for libraries?

A clear consensus among working groups was the need for education, AI literacy and awareness among MIS and MLIS students and library staff so that we may be leaders in our own education and the education of our patrons. There is a strong desire for education and a curriculum that includes information on the risks of sharing information, privacy concerns, informed consent, algorithmic literacy, skills training and basics such as incorporating how Facebook uses your information into 'How to use Facebook' sessions.

Table discussions included calls for position statements and policy positions from CFLA-FCAB to start a conversation about the issues and articulate opportunities and limitations, risks and benefits to inform policy.

Participants identified several potential allies and partners in research, including CIFAR, universities, telecoms, trusted vendors such as BookNet Canada , and provincial, national and international associations.

Summary of Community Responses:

- Establish training opportunities for library staff to develop basic understanding of AI;
- Integrate AI into MIS and MLIS programs' curricula;
- Develop educational materials for the public around AI concepts, benefits, and limitations;
- Advocate for responsible applications of AI that respect privacy and actively aim to eliminate bias while emphasizing transparency and openness.

Intellectual Freedom - Sustaining a Core Value

Panel participants:

Dr. Mary Cavanagh, Associate Professor, School of Information Studies, University of Ottawa

Dr. Marie D. Martel, Professeure adjointe, École de bibliothéconomie et sciences de l'information (EBSI), Université de Montréal

Pilar Martinez, Chief Executive Officer, Edmonton Public Library

Dr. James Turk, Director, Centre for Free Expression & Distinguished Visiting Professor, Ryerson University

Moderator: Jeff Barber, Library Director and CEO, Regina Public Library

The What:

Librarians and libraries have supported intellectual freedom for many years, and have even enshrined it within values statements issued by the American Library Associations in their Core Values of Librarianship (also endorsed by CFLA-FCAB in 2017), in the International Academic and Research Library Associations (IARLA)'s Values Statement, and elsewhere. Such support for intellectual freedom has traditionally been primarily focused on "Banned Books" and "Freedom to Read" activities, which hinges on the importance of readers having access to the broadest range of information sources and views. However, there are also instances, such as when events (either taking place at a library or organized by a library) can be seen to have politically unsavoury connotations, where libraries are required to speak more prominently and decisively to this inherent value and defend their programming or policy decisions. Though not entirely a new occurrence, the possibility of supporting equality and bringing about social justice via programs and priorities is simultaneously gaining traction within libraries, and as such there is uncertainty about how to reconcile this value with intellectual freedom and the related concept of freedom of expression.

The session opened by reviewing the ALA definition:

> Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause or movement may be explored. – May 29, 2007, Office of Intellectual Freedom, ALA

The So What:

Dr. Martel quoted Stanley Fish: "The thing to do is to go out there and argue for one position," suggesting that libraries must actively assume the role in being a centre for sharing opposing views, and simultaneously uphold this position within the digital realm. She suggested that instead of looking at social justice and intellectual freedom as opposing views, that instead they might both be viewed through a common lens.

Instead of only striving for the *equal right* of every voice to be heard, we need to work for the *equal possibility* of every voice being heard.

In her presentation, Dr. Cavanagh took a pragmatist view, stating that "we guard a space for all voices" and upholding the central value of access to ideas without restrictions. She nevertheless acknowledged new challenges in this exchange of ideas, such as the loss of respect for expertise and the fact that while libraries were created primarily for individual use, a shift to increased group participation in these environments brings new opportunities for conflict. She also asserted that libraries have a responsibility to protect minority voices, which can be viewed by some as the need to limit majority/dominant voices.

Dr. Turk took up the subject Dr. Cavanaugh had introduced, asserting that while some may feel that their rights are being overridden by the expression of certain views, the right to free expression should always be upheld, as this is how we develop our ideas, how advancement of knowledge is achieved, and how democracy is sustained.

Ms. Martinez spoke of two difficult situations she fielded at the helm of the Edmonton Public Library (EPL) system, having booked two speakers for their Forward Looking speaking series who became controversial for different reasons prior to their appearance: Joseph Boyden[3] and George Takei [4]. Despite criticisms, EPL decided in both cases to go ahead with the speakers' appearances, as they did not want to set a precedent to cancel any event that some might deem unpopular. Ms. Martinez's central message was that censorship is not the answer and diversity must be promoted – both need to be defended and affirmed.

Overall, there was general agreement by all panelists that intellectual freedom is a core value that must be promoted and upheld. Although several acknowledged that there are challenges to supporting intellectual freedom in all cases, none argued for placing limits on this right beyond those offered by Canadian law such as that on hate speech. There was nevertheless acknowledgement that some members of the library community are uncomfortable with unmitigated free speech, which they believe conflicts with libraries' responsibility to create a safe space for all community members including marginalized populations.

The Now What: Key takeaways from the day's table discussions

Working table discussions addressed:

Q1. What should CFLA-FCAB do to support intellectual freedom principles generally, and how should CFLA-FCAB support libraries when faced with intellectual freedom

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[3] http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/amid-ancestry-controversy-edmonton-library-defends-joseph-boyden-event-1.3944855

[4] http://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/celebrity/paula-simons-george-takei-controversy-forces-edmonton-public-library-to-go-boldly-into-moral-morass

challenges?

Q2. What can libraries do at the local level to be prepared to respond to the broad range of intellectual freedom challenges e.g. collections, programs, internet access, art exhibits, room bookings?

The common theme that arose from the table discussions was the need, at all levels from national to local, for all libraries as well as CFLA-FCAB member associations, for a toolkit to deal with both proactive and reactive action on this topic. The toolkit might comprise:

- Templates for policy and procedure, going beyond traditional materials reconsideration requests and including programs, room bookings, etc.
- Media, communications and advocacy training and templates as well as access to expert advice
- Program and collection development tools to balance controversial expression by facilitating opposing sides and marginalized voices; this may include guidance on conversation programming, on displays, and on collection balance.
- Tools for educating staff, public, governing boards, and administrators on libraries' support intellectual freedom
- Guidance and templates on responding to specific challenges, including a mechanism to express national library community support, and sample conversation talking points for acknowledging a complainant's valid concerns
- If possible, a dedicated fund to support smaller institutions' expenses in defending an intellectual freedom challenge.

In the Spring of 2018 CFLA-FCAB established its Intellectual Freedom Committee. This Committee could create a framework report that would cover the need and the resourcing for all of the above.

In addition, participants also looked to CFLA-FCAB, and this Committee, to rewrite the Statement on Intellectual Freedom to place it squarely in the context of Canadian law. It is worth noting here that the Canadian legal framework is distinct. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms grants freedom of expression in Canada, but sets reasonable limits on this freedom; hatred offences, including advocating genocide, publicly inciting hatred, and promoting hatred, are criminal offences. In addition, participants want the statement to better frame the social justice balance, such as through a series of test questions that could help libraries make decisions. There was support for an attempt to write the statement in simple language, and considerable support for better promotion of the statement both publicly and within the library community.

Summary of Community Responses:

- Create a toolkit to help libraries prepare for, respond to, and understand intellectual freedom challenges
- Develop a dedicated fund to help with libraries' expenses in defending challenges
- Formulate a new Statement on Intellectual Freedom that helps frame the social justice balance in clearer language

Conclusion

As a newly constituted organization, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations – Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques (CFLA-FCAB) is establishing itself as the national voice for Canada's library associations. This is not possible without the effort and support from our member associations, and this first Forum made that clear. The Forum gathered a diverse group of engaged library professionals who have given CFLA-FCAB and the broad Canadian library sector some clear direction on dealing with these two issues.

One of these issues, artificial intelligence, is an emerging one, and the Forum provided great insight from the perspective of library values. The other, intellectual freedom, has been at the forefront of library advocacy for many years, yet the community continues to refine its approach in light of social and industry trends. In both cases, it was demonstrated that the library sector has a unique perspective, and that it has work to do.

This paper outlines the next steps the Canadian library community needs to consider in order to address these issues. It is the commitment of CFLA-FCAB to take a lead role in a sector-wide pursuit of the actions identified at the Forum. CFLA-FCAB is its member associations and the synergy of the member associations is CFLA-FCAB. CFLA-FCAB's next steps are to shape its priorities and, with its member associations, determine specific actions that will position Canada's library sector to positively address the issues and incredible opportunities of Artificial Intelligence and Intellectual Freedom.

The CFLA-FCAB Board invites your input and participation regarding future action surrounding these issues.

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