

Western Research Data Centre
Advisory Board Meeting
Minutes
November 21, 2016

Members present: Iris Gutmanis, Amardeep Thind, Glenda Babe, Vince Gray, Mark Daley, Ken McRae, Piotr Wilk, and Michael Haan.

Regrets: Chris Robinson, Sisira Sarma, Daniel Edelstein.

Structure of meeting

- Previous meetings have focused on datasets. This meeting will take a different structure and lists of datasets will simply be handed out

Benefits of RDC Program to Western

- Cindy indicated Western receives the following benefits:
 - o A lot of new administrative datasets are coming in from the Ministry of Health.
 - o Ontario Child Health Survey (sample 1 happened 15 years ago. Sample 2 in 2012, it will be linked with administrative files.
 - o Pilot data are available.

Personnel Changes

- Brad Corbett resigned, Nathalie was hired as his replacement.
- Glenda was hired recently to cover Nathalie's maternity leave.
- Nathalie is returning January 9th and Glenda will become a statistical assistant at that time.
- Mphatso is on maternity leave until August 2017. Staffing will be reevaluated at that time.

RDC Program (Cindy, Michael and Piotr)

- Since it opened in 2004 RDC traffic at Western has increased significantly and leveled off in 2014 with 200 draft dyads.
- The maximum number of dyads a full time analyst should have are 160.
- These levels are similar to University of Waterloo and University of Calgary and lower than Ottawa, UBC, and Winnipeg, 1/3 of that of all of Quebec and 1/3 of Toronto.
- Dyads matter for funding and personnel.
- In the past years we have not recruited for more researchers to use the RDC. There is no budget to do more that is why brown bags and information sessions have not continued.

RDC Courses

- Cindy: explained RDC courses and how they work. RDC courses can run either per semester or for a full year. A full year is usually recommended. The students would need to go through security clearance to get access into the RDC. Once they have access they can work with a data set to provide some sort of output as a final assignment in their course (usually they just hand in the syntax as a final assignment).

- Are courses desirable?
 - o Michael: the point of the RDC is to train researchers. Is there an appetite for this sort of thing within Western? Some things that we could do within the RDC is to:
 - Teach researchers how to deal with missing data, etc.? But we need to do that on a cost recovery basis.
 - The idea is to bring people in for training.
 - o Piotr: courses could run through the RDC but it is cost neutral.
- Timing of courses should be considered (2 a semester is recommended). Reasonable assignment course is more likely.
- It may be more useful to do it at the university level of how to use the big data files.
- Summer courses at Schulich may bring people to the RDC.
- New program of a Master's in Data Analytics. Think they have talked about doing RDC courses.
- Send students in the data analytics program of what is possible in the RDC.
- Utilization in the university; epidemiology, economics, and sociology.

Training Session on Structural Equation Models (Piotr Wilk)

- Piotr has done a lot of work in the linkage between RDC, ICES.
 - o Workshop in library, sign to show that we are moving and working together.
 - o It is more important than just training, more collaboration.
 - o Show how good research could be better by involving all three organizations.
- Brad used to talk about all available data sets but that was done through brownbag and information sessions that are no longer available due to funding.
- Brown bag sessions used to help with what each researcher is doing with the datasets as well as get feedback on how to improve your research.
 - o Attendance level of brown bags were around 20-40
- Vince does similar sessions about public data.

The RDC's new location on the 6th floor of SSC (Michael Haan)

- Floor plan of 6th floor (Institute for Social and Economic Policy)
- This new space is much better for the RDC and has more tools for training researchers.
- The downside is that it might give the impression that it is just for social science but that is not the case at all.
- How was the decision made?
 - o The decision was made through the Dean's office. It is simply relocating from one space in the social science to a different space in the social science.
- Who would cover the cost of the relocation?
 - o Since the space is owned by social science so it comes down to the dean, and he covers the cost.
- space was made for RDC in the library but told not to do it (this decision was made by the dean)
- are researchers part of the RDC or part of the new institute? Who do we talk about classes to?
 - o The RDC it is still its own thing, however, it has just relocated to a new space. It is not controlled by the dean or the institute.

- Moving will probably give more money. Hoping that being part of the centre would provide more attention and people will access it more.
- Even though the centre is moving we want to stay autonomous.
- Idea was to put RDC in a better space. Social Science is not taking the RDC. Control of the RDC will stay as is. Will not restrict usage. Idea is to put it in a better place and have it grow.

Budget (Piotr Wilk)

- Central administration would pay all the bills. Then this was not implemented because it would move to the library, but now we are moving to the 6th floor so it is unknown.
- The RDC is probably moving in March of 2017
- No clarity around budget and governance. That information needs to be figured out and sent out.
- We will figure out the budget and then we can figure out what to do with it, if we can make the RDC bigger.
- Piotr Wilk provided documentation on the budget of the RDC and how it is currently running.
- We are allocated funding based on spending, the more we use the more we get.
- We just applied for CFI funding, which has been approved.
- Future of the RDC is that it would be open 24 hours and the data would be stored outside of the RDC, the new space is designed for this.
- Social science is covering the relocation cost.

Building relationship between Library, ICES and RDC

- We do not have the budget so we should wait to find out that before that.
 - This would be a research network of working together.
- Centralizing everything will make access easier and decrease the chance of a breach.
- what is the vision of the new institute?
 - Instead of keeping it as a data holder can we link it to international data, etc.
- RDC data has to be approved by Statistics Canada, you can bring in your own data as long as it is approved.
- If you have public international data you can bring it in without a problem. Once you link it with Statistics Canada data, sharing becomes complicated.
- What is the vision for our RDC currently?
 - To have people within the RDC to do statistical analysis (or similar activities)
 - There are currently lots of people who do not know the RDC and would have helped a lot if they knew what we were about. There is a lot of need to promote the RDC.
- There needs to be an announcement about moving the RDC, put the new layout on the website.

Provincial Data Updates:

- RDC network starting to talk about linking data sets to the province, this is moving but will take time but it will be really great for research.
- They are able to link anything with anything unless someone is paying for that.
- There has to be some public access with this data to get people excited.

Dates for next meeting:

- Michael and Piotr will have discussion with deans to talk about budget and governance and get back to us with dates

Thank you, Piotr Wilk, for linking public files and ICIS data sets.