

March 2004

**Canadian Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (CATTW)
Association canadienne des professeurs de rédaction technique et scientifique
(ACPRTS)**

Consultation on the Transformation of SSHRC

1. Role of SSHRC

The role of SSHRC should be

- To provide financial support in the human sciences for research by individual researchers, by small groups, and by large groups
- To promote the dissemination of knowledge and the results of fundamental and applied research through adequate financial support
- To support small associations in their efforts to grow, particularly in emerging disciplines

2. Team Research and Networking

Research in technical, scientific and professional communication takes place in an interdisciplinary framework. Professional language practices are observed and studied from a variety of theoretical and methodological angles; moreover, such studies are very often undertaken in collaboration with groups and organizations from outside academia.

Therefore CATTW members are very comfortable with the increased value being placed on applied research and on collaboration between researchers and the community. They are already making a tangible contribution to the well-being of the community through well-established research with a variety of partners.

CATTW considers that the creation of an Institute of Professional Communication would help to shape and support these collaborative undertakings. Such an Institute could serve as an interdisciplinary window for SSHRC-supported research, and could provide a site for the exchange of information between researchers and the community. With its expertise in professional public communication, CATTW could contribute effectively to the creation of such an Institute.

However, CATTW members recognize that the applied dimension of their research is not adequately recognized and valued by granting agencies, scholarly journals, or university promotion committees. Fundamental research remains the cornerstone of the university career. CATTW members have long combined their expertise in both modes of research, basing their applied research on fundamental research in linguistics, in discourse analysis, in the sociology of communication, and in educational sciences, to mention but a few disciplines. Since SSHRC intends to revise its policies with respect to applied research and university-community partnerships, CATTW urges SSHRC to do so in collaboration with university administrations, to ensure that the criteria used to evaluate professors' accomplishments are uniform and reflect this new orientation.

Another difficulty that can arise from partnerships between university researchers and non-academic partners is that people in the workplace more often than not seek to have their own conclusions corroborated by university researchers and may consider a true research process to be a waste of time. It is important to protect the neutrality of researchers and their ability to exercise their critical spirits. Innovative thought and the production of new knowledge should be preserved and valued. In the case of partnerships between scholars and community members, clear guidelines must be established to protect the integrity of the research and the freedom of the researcher.

3. Promotion of Research

CATTW members believe that SSHRC should do more to support and promote research.

An association's annual conference is an indispensable tool for the exchange of research results and for the consolidation of networks among members. CATTW asks SSHRC to improve its program of aid for attendance at scholarly conferences, to increase such aid, to make this program more accessible, and to provide stable, long-term funding for all associations. In the current situation, a dozen associations that are members of the Federation are nevertheless excluded from the SSHRC program that provides aid for conference attendance, a situation which CATTW considers unfair.

Participation in an association's annual conference is also important to the education of graduate students; CATTW has difficulty providing them with adequate financial assistance to defray the costs of their participation. Similarly, lack of financial support can deter new scholars from participating, as they often do not yet have access to personal research grants. Lack of funding also limits the participation of international scholars and the ability of the association to invite guest speakers. CATTW is making considerable effort on the international scene to attract European and American members. The lack of funding for conference attendance restricts the potential growth of the Association, and in particular our efforts to establish a dynamic network of scholarly exchange between members from Canada, the United States, Europe and other continents. These restrictions are particularly detrimental to the Francophone Canadian research community in the field of technical and scientific writing, since this small community of scholars must turn towards Europe to enlarge its network of collaborators.

The publication of conference proceedings and of a scholarly journal associated with our field of research is also indispensable to the dissemination of our research and the promotion of our discipline. It also provides an important avenue to contact and attract scholars from the United States and Europe, with whom CATTW is cultivating numerous links which remain fragile in the present financial circumstances. WEB publications alone are not considered as reliable nor taken as seriously as print publications.

The Association considers that SSHRC should undertake and finance a serious study of the implications of the move toward WEB publication of scholarly research.

4. SSHRC Programs

Standard research grants, for individuals and for teams, should be maintained. It is essential that SSHRC provide programs to support new scholars at this point in time, when Canadian universities are facing a major renewal of their teaching staff and when the production of grant-supported research remains the major criterion for promotion.

Financial support for research journals aimed at readers from outside the university community would be an idea welcomed by the CATTW membership, which is already involved in various applied research projects and partnerships with the community. The possibility of publishing such a journal would give increased visibility to the work of our researchers and would contribute to the recognition of their contributions to the community. Such a journal could be associated with the proposed Institute of Professional Communication.

We stress that the program of aid and attendance grants for scholarly associations must be improved, revised, and made accessible to all associations, since an association's annual conference is an irreplaceable platform for communication, exchange, and recruiting.

5. General Observations

- The new move towards partnerships and networking must not be made at the expense of individual research; moreover, it must not restrict the research subjects supported by grants throughout Canada.
- One of the significant repercussions of research in the human sciences is the improvement of teaching in the associated disciplines. This is an important result of research grants, since training the next generation of scholars is of primary importance.

- CATTW has a leading role to play in the promotion and emergence of a new discipline. In fact, professions associated with the fields of communication and language practices are at the heart of the new knowledge-based economy. The processing, management, production and communication of information are activities that are integral to the workplace. There is a growing need for specialists in the field of professional communication. In such a context, CATTW's contribution and efforts should be recognized by adequate financial support.

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