THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Learning Exchange

<u>**Making Research Accessible in the DTES Initiative**</u>

Description, Guiding Principles and Actions

Working document – Updated February 15, 2017

<u>**Background**</u>
What is the 'Making Research Accessible' initiative (MRAi)? The MRAi is a campus-community collaboration led by the UBC Learning Exchange that seeks to improve access to academic research and community-generated materials with a focus on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES). The need to access high-quality research and information was brought to the attention of the Learning Exchange by people living and working in the DTES. These groups voiced their concern with research projects that extracted information and findings that were locked behind publisher paywalls. Members of community organizations also identified the need to preserve community-generated materials.

The MRAi's goals are to **1.** Increase the accessibility and impact of research by facilitating: open-access to research materials, the development of plain-language summaries, and opportunities to share information and learn from one another (i.e. knowledge mobilization), and **2.** Increase the recognition and availability of community-generated materials such as program reports, research and evaluation documents, and organizational histories

Housed at the Learning Exchange, the MRAi is a partnership with UBC Library, the Public Scholars Initiative (PSI) and various stakeholders in the DTES. The MRAi is pursuing several avenues for disseminating research focused on the DTES, including an online and open access information repository that contains academic research and community-generated materials. An online repository will contribute to knowledge transfer initiatives by making these resources available to agencies and individuals in and beyond the DTES. The MRAi also works to facilitate opportunities for faculty members, community organizations, students, community members, and other stakeholders to learn from and collaborate with each another. Through developing a wider platform to share the findings from research and community-generated materials, and facilitating the uptake of this information in the context of the DTES, we hope to broaden the positive impact of evidence-based information in people's lives.

Goals of the initiative
The MRA initiative has five broad goals.
1. Collect and preserve in-scope materials about the DTES in UBC's open access repositories to share community-generated work and academic, peer-reviewed publications.
2. Facilitate open access to materials about the DTES.
3. Leverage the collection to improve knowledge exchange and support knowledge translation.

4. Facilitate communication and collaboration between stakeholders to encourage accessible and responsible research practices in the DTES.
5. Promote interdisciplinary communication and collaboration to break down research silos.

Guiding principles

- We believe in open access to information.
- We promote interdisciplinary and intersectoral collaboration.
- We recognize that this work is messy, and encourage transparent and respectful communication practices that address issues as they arise.
- We acknowledge that the Making Research Accessible initiative is an emerging and consultative project where we are continually gaining clarity about what is/is not achievable or in-scope.
- We encourage researchers to consider using existing data and materials before collecting new information.
- We aim to promote a culture shift in how research is organized and conducted in the DTES.

Outcomes and Benefits of the MRAi

Benefits to DTES Communities:

- Support campus-community collaboration and opportunities to share information and learn from one another (i.e. knowledge mobilization).
- Increase the visibility and usefulness of high quality research that has already been conducted, while reducing the burden on research participants and meeting some of their information needs.
- Provide community members with access to academic research and community materials they helped create, and work with them to identify opportunities to increase the impact of this information.
- Provide flexible income generating opportunities, paid training and learning opportunities to peer researchers.
- Provide organizations and service providers with access to resources for grant applications and program development.

Benefits to UBC Campus Communities:

- Support campus-community collaboration and opportunities to share information and learn from one another (i.e. knowledge mobilization).
- Develop processes to support the development of plain-language summaries.
- Improving access to information collected by organizations working in the DTES.
- Work to develop processes for digitization off-campus.
- Strengthen collaborative networks with organizations outside of the campus community.
- Break down silos within the university and encourage interdisciplinary collaboration (e.g. organizing faculty forum on MRAi).

- Provide students and academics with access to data and orienting materials that may offer alternative views of the DTES and inspiration for collaborative community based work.
- Curate publicly available resources for orienting new staff, students, and academics to the neighbourhood.

Scope of the MRAi information repository
- Focus on the DTES
- Online and physical repositories will include peer-reviewed journal articles, PhD dissertations, data sets, and community-generated publications
- Areas of special interest include mental health, HIV/AIDS, issues related to food security, Housing and sustainability (identified by community organizations)
- Special care for at-risk materials (e.g., materials currently only available in print, unpublished Data sets)
    - Focus on UBC-generated research
    - Focus on material published since 2010

UBC Learning Exchange as Initiative Lead
- Positioned in both the UBC and DTES communities, and connected to staff, students, and faculty members at the university, and to organizations and residents in the DTES
- Guided by place- and strengths-based approaches to community development
- Committed to ethical research practices
- All programming and activities are rooted in the idea of 'learning exchanges,' where everyone has something to learn and something to share.

Stakeholders (not listed in order of importance)
- UBC Learning Exchange
- UBC Library
- DTES community members, including research participants
- UBC Public Scholars Initiative
- UBC Community Engagement Office
- UBC Office of Research Ethics
- UBC faculty and staff researchers
- UBC students volunteering or conducting community-based research in the neighbourhood
- Students and faculty from SFU and other higher education providers with an interest in the DTES
- Community organizations and service providers, including community centres, Neighbourhood Houses, newcomer-serving agencies, health, housing and economic organizations, municipal government, and philanthropic and non-profit foundations

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee consults with stakeholders to guide the initiative's direction and activities. Members as of 31 January 2017:

- Angela Towle, Academic Director of the UBC Learning Exchange
- Kathleen Leahy, Director of the UBC Learning Exchange
- Kristina McDavid, Executive Director COPPUL
- Alina McKay, Research Assistant at the UBC Learning Exchange
- Aleha McCauley, Community Engagement Librarian at Irving K. Barber Learning Centre
- Allan Cho, Community Engagement Librarian at Irving K. Barber Learning Centre
- Efe Peker, Public Scholarship Coordinator at UBC Graduate School

2017 Work Plan

1. **Facilitate dissemination of academic research and community-generated materials with a focus on the DTES through an open-access repository, the 'DTES Information Hub'**
   - Pilot prototype of the open-access database with community organizations that have a strong understanding of the information needs in the DTES and make changes based on feedback.
   - Refine web and search interface for LE website based on feedback from community consultations.
   - Work with community organizations and peer researchers to come up with criteria to identify community-generated materials that should be prioritized for digitization, complete a risk assessment for this work (copyright) and digitize.
   - Work with LAIS 608 class to identify the utility of plain-language summaries.
   - Explore need for a physical repository staffed by community members in the Learning Exchange.

2. **Strengthen Campus-Community collaboration**
   - Improve the 'DTES Information Hub' so that it more accurately reflects the information needs of people who live and work in the DTES.
   - Bring community partners to the table to help shape the future direction of the MRAi.
   - Develop guidelines for paying peer researchers and community members.
   - Support opportunities to share information and learn from one another.

3. **Maintain cIRcle repository**
   - Work with cIRcle staff to maintain and update the cIRcle repository of DTES academic and non-academic literature.
   - Collect full-text pdfs of academic publications and PhD dissertations focused on or relevant to the DTES.
   - Gain permission from publishers and authors of existing articles and reports as necessary.

- Develop indexing schema/standards.
- Update and maintain workflow documentation as needed.

4. **Expand faculty involvement in the MRAi**
   - Leverage expertise within the campus community to support the MRAi goals.
   - Build relationships with Computer Sciences and UBC's iSchool.
   - Collaborate with faculty to develop proposal for a SSHRC Partnership Development grant to support work being done by the MRAi (LOI due in November).
   - Provide opportunities to build consensus and strengthen an understanding the MRAi project (e.g. Faculty Forum planned for April).
   - Organize and facilitate 'Library working group' meetings that bring library stakeholders together

5. **Support student learning and engagement**
   - Work with PSI to organize two panel discussion on Open Access, one introductory session in April and a second panel discussion including community partners in September geared towards graduate students.
   - Facilitate in-class learning opportunities that support the wider goals and needs of the MRAi (e.g. working with Computer Sciences and iSchool masters and PhD classes).
   - Continue to provide learning opportunities and mentorship to co-op and graduate students.
   - Create opportunities for student researchers to communicate interests, projects and findings.

6. **Dissemination**
   - Identify opportunities to disseminate information about the MRAi to campus and community collaborators.
   - Develop public facing description of the project and publish to UBC LE and UBC Library websites.
   - Participate in community events and knowledge mobilization opportunities.
   - Identify and participate in campus events and knowledge mobilization opportunities. For example:
     - *January: Presentations to LAIS 608 class and MUX Lab*
     - *March: Poster at SPPH Exchange*
     - *May: C2U Expo conference team enquiry / symposium*
     - *May: Health xChange PechaKucha*

7. **Continue to identify new ways to support the information needs of communities in the DTES**
   - Develop a 'Knowledge Exchange Toolkit'.
   - Work with UBC Research Ethics to support CBR and knowledge mobilization initiative.

8. **Evaluation of MRAi**

- As part of the MRAi Community Engagement Plan we have committed to evaluating the 'DTES Information Hub' through tracking overall use statistics (reach indicators).
- Once the tool is live we will also complete an online survey of users that explores the usefulness of the tool.
- LAIS 608 students will be completing an evaluation of the usefulness of plain-language summaries in translating complex research studies.
- An evaluation of the extent to which the MRAi has met its goals will also be completed in January 2018