Research Commons 2020 Impact Report

OUR MISSION

The UBC Library Research Commons (Research Commons) is a multidisciplinary hub supporting research endeavours, partnerships, and education. We embrace both new and traditional exploratory scholarship and provide access to physical and virtual space, as well as services and expertise for the advancement of research. Our expertise includes:

DATA SERVICES

We make data available to UBC and the broader research community. Our reference consultations, workshops, and in-class presentations help researchers find the data they need and develop the skills to use it effectively. Notable collection developments include:

▸ Launch of Abacus Open Data, the only publicly-available source for hundreds of Statistics Canada datasets, including Census microdata

▸ Data on the impact of COVID-19 in Canada
▸ Access to BC Assessment data on the sales and valuation of BC properties, sought by UBC researchers in multiple disciplines

DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP

The Research Commons' Digital Scholarship efforts assist researchers in developing foundational digital and computer-literacy skills. Noteworthy activities include:

▸ Expanding the Core Skills workshop series to incorporate a wider range of computational fluencies, including the Unix shell command line, web scraping, planning and executing digital projects, and publishing sustainable websites using Jekyll

- The Rhythm and Polyrhythmic Music (RAPM) project with the UBC School of Music, in which the Research Commons provided skills training to project members and informed the technical architecture of the project's output—a website visualizing corpus data on polyrhythmic music
- Developing a static digital exhibit site using best practices in minimal computing and digital exhibits, requiring collaboration across multiple library units, including Rare Books & Special Collections (RBSC), Digital Initiatives (DI), Music, Art, and Architecture (MAAL), and Woodward Library
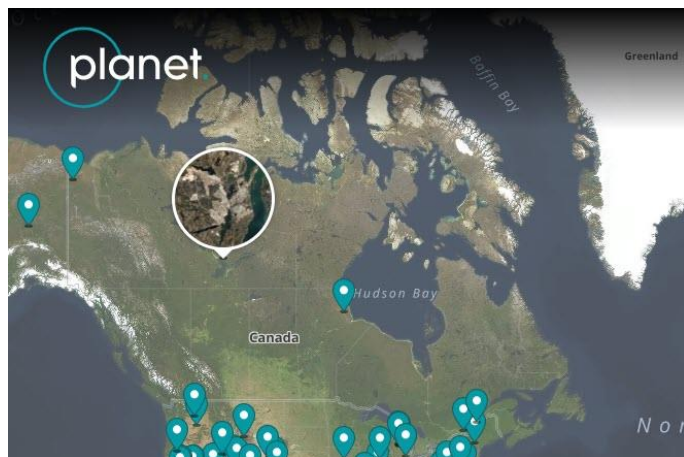
GEOSPATIAL RESOURCES

Supporting teaching, learning, and research in the areas related to spatial, place-based, and cartographic topics. Specific roles the Research Commons plays in geospatial resources include:

- Physical map collection management of approximately 200,000 items
- Extensive collection of digital resources, such as Planet.com's daily satellite imagery datasets,

GeoBC's digital elevation and natural resources data, and ICIS cadastral (land ownership) and infrastructure data
- Software management supporting a range of spatial-analysis research and cartographic visualization and composition
- Services supporting these resources, including strong links to email reference interactions and ongoing partnerships with faculties across campus

RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT

The Research Commons and our campus partners help faculty, students, and staff manage, preserve, and disseminate their data. Recent Research Data Management (RDM) accomplishments include:

- Inaugural RDM Fall Series, in partnership with Advanced Research Computing (ARC) and UBC Okanagan Library: 19 sessions over three weeks in September and October 2020

- Partnership with the Portage Network to create Geodisy—an open-source spatial-discovery platform for Canadian research data

- Creation of new dataverses: Pediatric Sepsis Data CoLab, OceanCanada Partnership, Fisheries Economics Research Unit, Ocean Dynamics Laboratory
- In-class collaborations with the Faculty of Forestry's Master of Geomatics for Environmental Management graduate program

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

GEODISY

The Research Commons launched Geodisy, an open-source tool that allows users to search online for Canadian research data through map-based discovery. Highlights include:

- Approximately 3,500 datasets harvested
- Over 3.5 million unique searches since April 1, 2020

GIScience workshops

In this Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (TLEF) project, PhD candidates created and led six reusable workshops on GIScience concepts and technologies. These modular workshops respond to a growing interest in data science among UBC researchers and enhance the Research Commons' collection of Open Educational Resources (OERs).
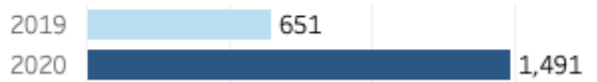

New GIScience workshops:

- Understanding spatial data: map projections
- Visualizing data with ArcGIS Online
- Spatial network analysis in QGIS
- Introduction to spatial data analysis with R
- Geocoding and web mapping with Python
- Geospatial analysis and visualization with Python

WORKSHOPS (Jan – Aug 2020)

‣ 82 workshops offered
‣ 1,491 participants attended

Workshop attendance (Jan-Aug)

2019	651
2020	1,491

Most popular workshops:

‣ Introduction to Git and GitHub
‣ Building a project website with Jekyll & GitHub Pages
‣ Introduction to web scraping
‣ Introduction to RefWorks, Mendeley, and Zotero

Participant Feedback

*"Great introduction to follow along examples. Covered useful topics and **helps build confidence** that using R could be a reality as otherwise the learning curve feels quite frightening!"*

*"Instructor knew her subject well, the presentation **screamed her passion** for the subject. She answered a common problem, the difficulties of installing Docker."*
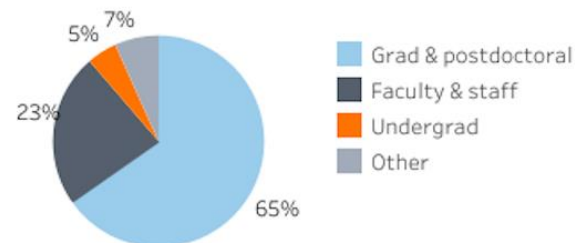
*"This was **so helpful**, I already booked again! Thank you . . . **library wizards**!"*

RESEARCH CONSULTATIONS (Jan – Aug 2020)

‣ 378 reference interactions with library employees
‣ 312 GAA-led consultations

Consultations by user group

Grad & postdoctoral 65%
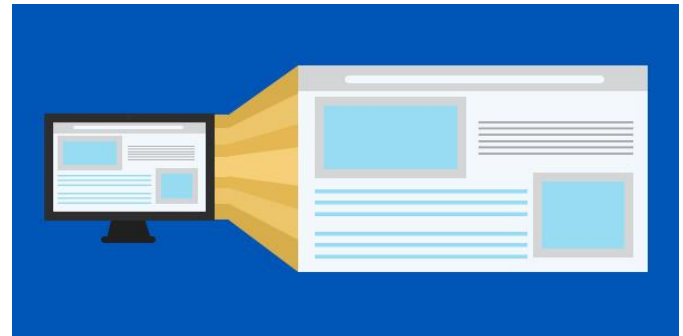Faculty & staff 23%
Undergrad 5%
Other 7%

OPEN EDUCATION

In addition to our workshops, the Research Commons team has created Open Educational Resources (OERs) as teaching and learning resources, freely available through the public domain or open copyright.

RESEARCH SPACES

- The Presentation Room (Koerner 548 and 552) has hosted numerous instruction and public programs, making use of the presentation podium with touchscreen control, 2 ceiling-mounted projectors with wired (HDMI and VGA) and wireless connection (AirMedia).
- Hoteling and Consultation Spaces used by our partners: UBC Research Ethics and the Centre for Writing and Scholarly Communications
- Project Rooms - Six bookable spaces (Koerner 454, 456, 496, 499, 553, and 555) for research project work of UBC Graduate Students and Faculty
- Digital Scholarship Lab (Koerner 497) designed for collaboration, flexibility, and ease of use for researchers working on data-rich and visually-mediated research
- New Graduate Spaces on Koerner Level Two - Participation in developing and planning of this new space

- Remote Lab - Students are remotely accessing the technology from the Digital Scholarship Lab and the Data GIS Lab's computers with specialized GIS and statistical-analysis software

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

- Pixellating - Digital Humanities Project Showcase
- 3 Minute Thesis (3MT)
- FIREtalks (Facilitated Interdisciplinary Research Exchange) series
- R Study Group

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Access Library Conference 2020
- Dataverse Community Meeting 2020
- Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Academic Library Services to Graduate Students Interest Group

- UBC Digital Humanities Conference
- Western Association of Map Libraries (WAML) 2020

FURTHER COLLABORATIONS
INSTRUCTIONAL

In addition to our own workshop offerings, the Research Commons worked closely with several UBC Library branches, including:

- Asian Library
- Scholarly Communications and cIRcle, Digital Initiatives
- Education Library
- Humanities and Social Sciences, Koerner Library

- Centre for Writing and Scholarly Communications, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre
- Woodward Library
- Centre for Scholarly Communication, UBC Okanagan Library

NEW PARTNERSHIPS
- WestGrid Workshop Series
- Advanced Research Computing (ARC)
- UBC Research Ethics
- Portage Network, Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL)
- New Digital Research Infrastructure Organization (NDRIO)
- Faculty of Forestry's Integrated Remote Sensing Studio (IRSS)
- Western Association of Map Libraries (WAML)
- Public Humanities Hub (PHH), a VP Research & Innovation (VPRI) funded cluster