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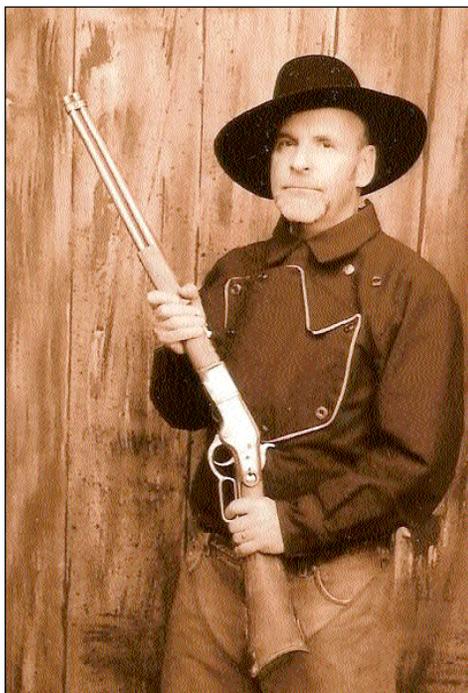
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First Things First

President's Message



**Cam Tilsen,
CIRPA President**

In the years I have been involved with CIRPA, I don't recall a President introducing their "public face" in the newsletter in quite this manner; however, the theme of this edition of the newsletter is "firsts", so why not indeed!

As you might expect, this is not my usual attire and I'm also more comfortable with a golf club in my hands (frankly, a few people thought I looked good as an outlaw). This was one of many photos taken at the

outstanding social event held at the Banff conference - there were quite a few other "interesting" pictures taken of CIRPA folk that evening, so perhaps we'll gather a few and post them on the website.

Friendly Alberta hospitality and good cheer were in abundance and I can't think of a more beautiful setting for our conference. Once again, our expectations were greatly exceeded with outstanding plenary speakers, excellent presentations and over 170 delegates. In the uncertain economic environment that has badly affected many of our institutions (combined with the H1N1 pandemic), it was difficult to predict our turnout this year. However, with a full slate of delegates from across Canada (including every province and one territory), it is evident that many were not deterred! This gives me confidence that CIRPA provides high-value professional development opportunities to its members; my confidence is also reinforced by the very positive feedback from this year's conference evaluation forms. We also attracted 50 first-timers; another indicator of our value and relevance.

As mentioned at the top, the theme of this issue is "firsts", so I would "first" like to thank many people:

First, thanks to the wonderful folks who worked so hard to put together this year's conference - you did an exceptional job and have raised the bar ever higher. It is one of our "traditions" that great conferences result from contributions of many talented and dedicated people from many different organizations - this year was no exception! Here they are:

Programming, workshops and evaluation: Kathleen Bigsby (Kwantlen Polytechnic), Jan O'Brien (Okanagan College), Ashley Lambert-Maberly (UBC), Tony Eder (U. Victoria), Patty Beatty Guenter and Tammi Carter (BC Ministry of Advanced Education), Joanne Heslop (Simon Fraser U.), Jackie Schach (Delta Consulting), Pam Montgomery (Vancouver Island U), Keith Fortowsky (U. Regina); Heather Friesen (College of the North Atlantic - Qatar).

Local Arrangements: Peter Seto (Mt Royal U.), Allan Starr (U. Calgary), Mandy Moser (U. Lethbridge), Lori Kaluzny (Mt Royal U).

Incidentally, volunteering for the conference committee is a great way to get involved with the association

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President's Message

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(and geography is no barrier!). If you are interested in helping out with CIRPA 2010 in Ottawa, please contact Conference Chair Tony Eder (teder@uvic.ca) or Local Arrangements Chair Caroline Lachance (clachance@aucc.ca).

As well, planning for CIRPA 2011 (tentatively in Fredericton, NB) is in its very early stages; should you be interested in helping out, please let me know.

Next, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to outgoing President Jeff Donnelly for his leadership and friendship over the past four years; he left the association in very good shape indeed - we continue to mature as an organization with a solid membership base and sound finances. But have no fear, Jeff will not surrender all CIRPA responsibilities; as immediate past president, he becomes chair of the Nominating Committee as well as being "on call" when advice is needed. Also, thanks to outgoing members of the Board: Ian Calvert and Denis Marchand - it has been a pleasure working with you!

Lastly, I would like to thank all of our corporate sponsors, specifically: Academica Group; eXplorance, Insightrix; Litco Systems; SAS Canada; Scantron. Their generous and ongoing support of CIRPA is greatly appreciated.

Now back to the "firsts":

- First-time collaboration with the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) in offering their workshop "Foundations of Planning in Higher Education". It is our intention to offer this and possibly

other SCUP workshops in conjunction with our annual conference; this represents great value in an era of limited budget resources.

- First-time members of the Board: welcome to Treasurer Caroline Lachance (AUCC); Directors Mardere Birkill Joubert (Portage College) and Sharon Shultz (Keyano College)

- First recipient of CIRPA's newly-created Outstanding Service Award (Rob Schultz, University of Saskatchewan)

- First CIRPA president from central Canada (and as a bonus), from Québec (me)

- If you are a "first" time member of the association, a warm wel-

“ as we continue to mature as an organization, it will be important to determine if we are appropriately organized to carry forward into the future. ”

come to you!

Now on to the serious stuff - in the coming year, my colleagues on the Board will be working hard on several fronts, the main being a renewed strategic plan for CIRPA. Since we achieved most of the objectives of our last 5-year plan (2004-2009), we feel strongly that it is necessary to once again examine our priorities and directions since CIRPA is facing new challenges, but at the same time there are potential opportunities that need to be explored.

In terms of challenges, we have a much larger and more diverse membership base to serve (77% more members than in 2004); there are potential value-added partnership

possibilities that need to be leveraged (the SCUP workshop is an example); continued professionalization of the discipline; public and political attention to accountability in higher education to which we need to be more actively involved. At the same time, we face competitive pressure from 'like' organizations, and shrinking institutional budgets could diminish professional development expenditures (conference attendance and membership). Therefore, as an organization, we have to demonstrate that we deliver the best value.

Last but not least, we have an opportunity to examine the role and responsibility of the Board itself. The present structure and positions have served us well; however, as we continue to mature as an organization, it will be important to determine if we are appropriately organized to carry forward into the future. At the same time we need to develop a

“ succession plan as many of our long-time members are approaching retirement. However, I am encouraged by seeing so many "youngsters" in our midst. It will soon be your turn to serve CIRPA. ”

It is our intention to have a broadly-based consultation with the entire membership over the next six months, culminating with presentation of a new strategic plan at the conference next October. Expect to hear more in the New Year!

So there you go - lots to do and think about - my colleagues on the Board are really excited about the work ahead and we look forward to serving you!

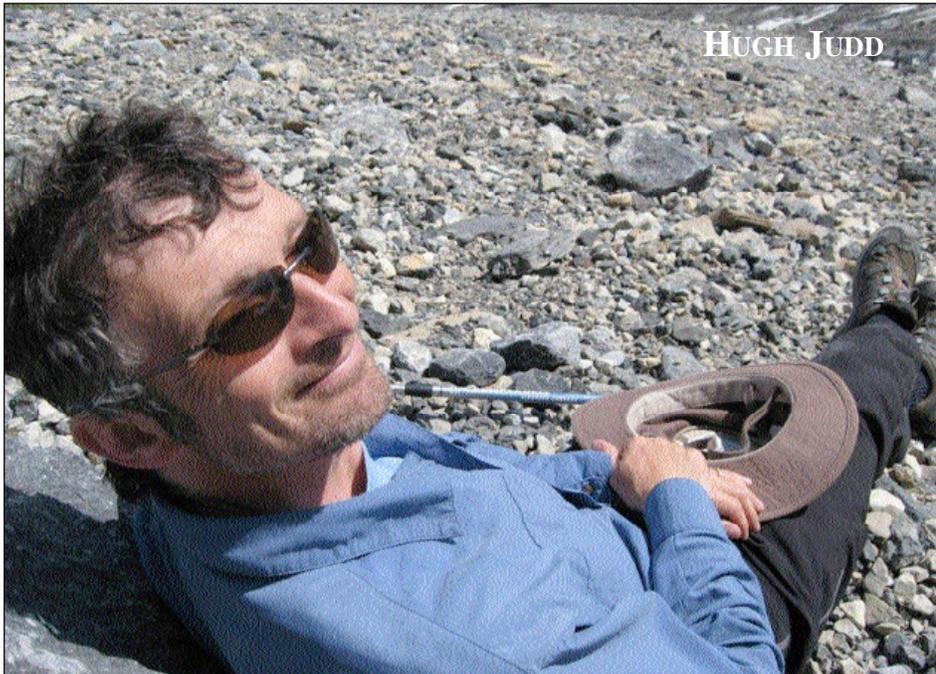
Feel free to contact me at any time - my door is always open!

An Interview with Data Warehouse Coordinator, Hugh Judd

As institutional researchers, we often rely on the expertise and support of professionals around us. Participation in consortiums or province-wide information sharing multiplies the impact of what we do and allows for an expanding understanding of our education systems. Here at the CIRPA newsletter, we had the opportunity to talk with Hugh Judd, one of those professionals who makes this kind of information sharing possible. Hugh is the Data Warehouse Coordinator with the Ministry of Advanced Education & Labour Market Development in BC, and our interview with him follows:

our CDW data to do this?" I never know what it's going to be when the phone rings. Sometimes I just know the answer and we are done in 30 seconds. Other times I have to write some SQL code or think up something I've never done before and it can take hours or days to figure it out and make it work. I've known a lot of these people for almost 10 years and we have great working relationships...it makes it seem like almost anything we want to do is possible. I love all the questions, because I get to help move peoples' work forward and I usually learn something new along the way. I think of my

Rosetta stone that standardizes the data coming into the CDW and allows us to build standard reports, comparing "apples to apples," for the 21 institutions in the CDW. We have data going back to 2002, and we refresh all of it twice a year to make sure data corrections are retroactive. We've kept personal information out of the data to protect privacy, but thanks to the Personal Education Number (PEN) that uniquely identifies secondary and post secondary students in B.C. we can go beyond institution level reporting and look at the system as a whole. Through the Student Transitions Project we can tie into detailed secondary system data as well as program enrolments and completions for the four research universities that don't contribute to the CDW directly. All the matching is done on PEN, so that data is vital to the cutting edge student transitions and mobility research going on right now in B.C. I think back on all the work done by so many people to make it happen and I feel so lucky to be here when it has finally come together. And of course it isn't just ALMD that does research. Sector representatives on the STP Steering Committee approve the research agenda, and very detailed pivot tables are released to contributing institutions on a regular basis, both by the STP and the CDW, that allow institutions to do all sorts of analysis. I recently visited a post secondary institution that was using STP pivot tables to find out where high school graduates from their catchment area were enrolling, by program. This is fundamental research that you just can't do without the system working together on data. We also have organizations like the B.C. Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) that have lead the way on student transition and mobility



1. Tell us a little about your current position as Data Warehouse Coordinator.

I have a great job. I get to work with IR staff, registrars, and DBAs all over the province on a regular basis, helping to solve problems ranging from "I can't connect to the database" to "why is the FTE analysis report D2 reporting some of my developmental courses under the skills category instead of the developmental category?" to "we are looking at student retention...can you help us use

work as a sort of catalyst...I help other people do their work faster and better, and that brings me a lot of satisfaction.

2. What IS the warehouse, and how does it contribute to institutional research in BC?

The ALMD Central Data Warehouse (CDW) is a database of B.C. public post secondary student course and program enrolments and completions, along with some demographic information. At the core are the Data Definitions and Standards, a sort of

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Interview with Hugh Judd

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to see how B.C.'s well developed course transfer system is working, sometimes focussing in on groups of special interest like Adult Basic Education learners. And there is another huge benefit to all the work that has been done to build the CDW and the STP: general data clean-up in institution record systems. When you load data into other systems you quickly discover the data entry errors and anomalies, so this improves even internal institution reporting. This is especially true since we developed a standard FTE counting methodology that uses the CDW to count FTE's exactly the same way for all institutions contributing to the CDW. Those reports are audited and the accuracy required has gone a long way to improving post secondary data quality and consistency in the province.

3. What is your vision for the Warehouse in the future?

Research! The CDW has become operational for the most part, so now the focus is on analysis. The CDW is not just a meeting of data, but a meeting of minds. Institutions, ALMD, and organizations like BCCAT meet regularly through committees to develop new research projects. And the participants are getting more knowledgeable about not only what data we have and what analysis is possible, but also the different business practices at post secondary institutions across the province. Right now I'm learning quite a bit about applicant data and the different business practices around applications to different programs. There are opportunities now to bring different pieces of research together to see how the whole system works, and that can lead directly to knowledge that benefits students and society.

2. Getting back to your role, do you consider yourself to be an institutional researcher? In what way?

There are definitely similarities between the institutional researcher role and my own, but also some differences. My focus is usually on the system and a standardized data set, but I do work closely with institutional researchers, sometimes assisting directly with internal research. Institutional researchers also have access to a lot of data that I don't see, and they have a much richer understanding of business practices at their institution, so I think if I parachuted into an institution I'd face quite a learning curve.

3. What is the most challenging thing about being the Data Warehouse Coordinator? What do you most enjoy about it?

Probably the most challenging thing is to accept the limits of what can be done with limited resources. I'm attracted to the details beneath the details and usually wish we could spend more time on things and go further. I sense a rich, dancing system but usually can only describe what is happen-

ing in broader terms. Where I don't compromise is chasing down exactly why a number is what it is when it seems like it might be wrong. I get real pleasure out of getting it right. What really brings me back to work every day though are the terrific people I work with, in person, on the phone, or by email. It is people who make the difference, that add the dimension that makes things pop. I often find my mind wandering back through time and remembering the people who have helped me over the years, and when I come back to the present there is usually a smile on my face.

CDW Firsts...

- **1991** – First Personal Education Numbers assigned to students in K-12
- **1995** - First meeting of Data Definitions and Standards Project Steering Committee
- **1996** - First publication of Data Definitions for Central Data Warehouse (CDW)
- **1997** - First data submitted to CDW
- **1997** – Initiation of the project to implement the Personal Education Number in the post secondary system
- **2002** - First complete standard set of tables from 22 institutions sending data to the CDW
- **2003** - First set of published standard reports from the CDW (headcounts and credentials awarded)
- **2005** - BCCAT's first release of research on the mobility of university transfer students from CDW institutions to research universities using CDW and research university data linked on PEN
- **2005** - Initiation of the Student Transitions Project to link enrolment data using PEN from secondary schools to post secondary data from the CDW and research universities to examine the BC public education system as a whole
- **2006** - First audited FTEs from the CDW using standard counting methods
- **2008** - First survey cohorts (Developmental level students and Short Stay Early Leaver students) extracted from CDW
- **2009** – First institution added to the CDW since 2002: Royal Roads University

CIRPA Newsletter Article – 2009 Annual General Meeting

By Kate McGovern, University of Regina

This year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held in Banff, Alberta on October 26, 2009. Combining lunch with the AGM resulted in a record attendance of 144 members, as compared to only 39 members in the previous year.

Jeff Donnelly, the President of the Association, announced that his term was coming to a close and that it had been a great pleasure to serve as President of CIRPA over the past four years. Jeff commented on the successful achievement of many of the Association's objectives laid out in the 2004 Strategic Plan, including increasing conference participation and membership.

Vice-President, Cam Tilson, reported that membership had reached an all time high of 258 in 2007/08, an increase of 16% over the previous year and 77% since the beginning of Jeff Donnelly's term as President.

The Treasurer, Ian Calvert, reported an increase in net assets. As of June 30, 2009 the Association's net assets were \$130,243, an increase of \$23,874 over June 30, 2008.

On behalf of Elizabeth Lane, the Communications Committee Chair, Jeff Donnelly thanked Sharon Shultz (Keyano College) for her contributions over the past two years as an editor of the newsletter. He also identified two new co-editors -- Shannon Murphy (Ambrose University College) and Kristen Hamilton (Thompson Rivers University) -- and extended special thanks to all those who had contributed articles to the newsletter in the past year.

The Nominations Committee Chair, Rob Schultz, indicated that this was his last year as committee chair and that the role would be taken over by Jeff Donnelly. He thanked out-going members of the Nominating Committee, Suzanne Drapeau and Herb O'Heron, and welcomed in-coming members Shauna Lehtimaki and Jan O'Brien.

Additional reports were provided on the past year's activities and future objectives of the Data Advisory Committee (co-chaired by Peter Seto and Herb O'Heron) and the Website Committee (chaired by Anna Burke).

Kathleen Bigsby, 2009 CIRPA-ACPRI Conference Chair, reported on the 2009 Conference. She acknowledged her co-chair, Peter Seto, who was responsible for the local arrangements and thanked the many committee members who assisted with the program planning and local arrangements.

Recognition was given to Jacques Turcotte (Université Laval) as a member Emeritus. Jeff Donnelly also presented CIRPA's first Outstanding Service Award to Rob Schultz (University of Saskatchewan).

This AGM saw numerous changes to the Board. Jeff thanked departing members for their contributions, acknowledged remaining members and welcomed newcomers.

Departing Members:

Conference Chair - Kathleen Bigsby (Kwantlen Polytechnic University)
Treasurer - Ian Calvert (Carleton University)
Member at Large - Denis Marchand (Université du Québec).

Remaining members in NEW positions:

President - Cameron Tilson (Concordia University; formerly Vice-President)
Vice-President - Peter Seto (Mount Royal University; formerly Member at Large)

Remaining members in same position:

Secretary - Kate McGovern (University of Regina)
Member at Large - Elizabeth Lane (Dalhousie University)
Member at Large - Anna Burke (Nova Scotia Community College)

New members:

Treasurer (and 2010 Conference - Local Arrangements) - Caroline Lachance (AUCC)
Member at Large - Sharon Shultz (Keyano College)
Member at Large - Mardere Birkill Joubert (Portage College).
2010 CIRPA Conference Program Chair - Tony Eder (University of Victoria)

Member Interview: Shane Simpson

While some of our members have probably forgotten what it's like to be new to the field, a growing number of us can remember all too clearly our first few months at our institutions and our positions. We took the opportunity that the theme of First gave us to talk to someone who's new to CIRPA and to institutional research at a post-secondary institution: Shane Simpson of Mount Royal University in Calgary.

Q: Tell us a bit about your position at Mount Royal. You're new to Institutional Research, aren't you?

A: I am a Research Analyst; I started working at Mount Royal in June 2009.

About my position... well the job description is a couple pages in length, so in short I would say I am responsible for providing quality information to decision makers. I do this through wielding the research process (utilizing quantitative and/or qualitative methodology), from designing an instrument through to analyzing and reporting on result in order to fulfill a particular "need to know" by the university. In regards to Institutional Research, I'd say I am not new to research, but I am new to Institutional Research.

Q: What have you found different about the research you do now, from the research experience you've had in the past?

A: There is greater passion regarding research, from multiple groups in the institution. They really "want to know" what is going on in their institution which makes research exciting - however this "want to know" usually makes it difficult to decipher a particular "goal" or "research question" because it seems everyone wants to know everything based upon their own department's/office's vested interests. There is also the concept of research timelines; it seems that those that promote a study sometimes have unrealistic expectations of a research timeline (i.e. how long it takes to draft and test an instrument; how long a study is fielded and why; the process of data cleaning; analysis; and drafting a report). I guess their passion for "wanting to know (immediately)" would explain this phenomena.

Q: This past conference was your first CIRPA conference, wasn't it? What did you find most helpful?

A: Yes it was. I found the Introduction to IR workshop, by Anna Burke of Nova Scotia Community College, to be the most helpful as it helped me to conceptualize the diversity within the field along with meeting some great individuals either in or associated with institutional research.

Q: And, as a newcomer, you also seized the opportunity to make a presentation. Can you tell me a bit about your pres-

entation?

A: Yes. The assessment team in our IR office did a presentation on how "context matters" in every aspect of institutional research. My segment was specifically on how defining diverse target populations creates context and ultimately meaning for the researcher and the study, along with (hopefully) reflecting an understanding of the respondent population. The conclusion was that if we understand the respondents then we are able to effectively communicate our questions to them and thereby get meaningful data/information in return. In other words, if we understand the respondents, then we should understand the response. I attempted to demonstrate this by using two diverse population groups that our IR office was sampling and fielding our own particular instruments at the time; Applicants to Open Studies and Early Leavers.

Q: Has doing the presentation helped your work?

A: In a way... it helped me to further conceptualize one particular group we are conducting a study on, 'applicants to open studies'. Little to no previous research has been done on this particular group and prior understanding of their profile and their intentions as applicants is tricky to say the least.

Q: And what have you found out about them?

A: Well, the presentation allowed further understanding of the four typologies in the study, which are: (1) applicants to Open Studies only, (2) applicants to Open Studies as well as another Mount Royal program, (3) applicants to Open Studies as well as other institution(s), and (3) applicants that enrol for Fall 2009... specifically that these groups are not mutually exclusive, they have unique behaviours and intentions, but they flow between groups. Other than that, I am in the midst of analyzing the data and drafting a report, so I cannot say anything more at the present time.

Q: Now that you've been to a conference, made a presentation, have been through half an academic year - you're practically a veteran! Any advice for the (other) newcomers?

A: Yes, I feel like a veteran! If you come from a background in research, institutional research demands are more numerous and it feels as if it is going at a faster pace. In order to keep up with the demands of the institution and the enthusiasm of its decision makers, the advice I would give, is to make sure to be (and to keep, which is the hardest part) very well organized. Develop reasonable and effective time-lines for projects, communicate these time-lines to relevant individuals, and stick with them so that the integrity of your work is kept sound. Other than that, enjoy the diversity that comes with the work, because if you enjoy it, then it does not seem like work :)

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