### The Project

- To examine user-generated content (UGC) in its current state, the state of knowledge related to UGC and identify gaps where additional research could create Canada’s digital content advantage.
- Seek to reach goals by asking the same questions in three domains of UGC:
  - Identify UGC in its current state
  - Identify successful models built for UGC
  - Identify and anticipate barriers to further development and use UGC
  - Anticipate the policy infrastructure needed to sustain a model to leverage further development of UGC to Canada’s advantage

### UGC: Three Major Domains

#### Creative Content
- UGC generated by individuals or small non-regulated groups.
- May be created, developed, captured and put on display by a individual on an online platform.
- Found on portals such as YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, & Facebook.

#### Small-Scale Tools
- Tools, modifications, & applications that have been created by a user or group of users.
- Game modifications/add-ons created by users/players to modify the game or assist in gameplay or virtual worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft, Second Life).
- Applications or tools created for mobile devices (such as the iPhone or Android).

#### Collaborative
- UGC authored collectively and shared by a self-regulating group of contributors.
- OSS includes both open-source software and free/libre software.
- Wikis such as wikipedia.
- Government data sets can be provided by any level of government.

### Creative Content

#### Current State of UGC
- Successful sites integrate content creation, aggregation, distribution and consumption into a single tool.
- A recurring theme throughout the literature on creative content is the erosion of the traditional dichotomies between traditional creators and end-users – typical users are now more able than ever to produce creative content in a transformative way.
- User-generated content sites and applications in Canada, as well as the state of knowledge related to UGC and the qualities of popular/viral UGC.

#### Barriers
- Closed proprietary platforms.
- Privacy and security issues.
- Copyright uncertainties.
- Access to bandwidth/infrastructures (“digital divide” concerns).
- Software/Hardware skills.
- Costs to accessing platforms.
- Lack of value or incentive (social, emotional, monetary).
- The digital divide.
- Broadband Internet access.
- Appropriately software/hardware for development.
- Computer/programming skills.
- Costs to accessing a game/virtual world.
- SDK costs.
- Policies preventing or limiting the creation of small-scale tools.

### Small-Scale Tools

#### Open source software (refers to a model of software production that is premised on making human readable code accessible — includes both “open source software (OSS)” and “Free software” (Most successful examples of projects include Linux, Mozilla Firefox, Apache platform).

- Government data sets (by providing access to datasets, open data projects can utilize government data for a range of uses (i.e. the local NextStop app for transit data) — simply by providing access to data, governments can encourage the creation of useful apps at no cost to themselves.
- Open source software production (fees are more attractive to users).

#### Policy & Infrastructures

- Limited information on policy for mobile applications.
- Companies have established privacy statements, Terms of Service agreements, and End-User License Agreements; some of these act as law in the virtual world.
- Community norms, player consent, and social sanctions act as infrastructure in games and virtual worlds.
- Different types of intellectual property may be awarded.
- Possible to apply “fair dealing” doctrine.
- Would be helpful to develop policies surrounding litigation, as this door has been opened and creates constraints.
- Copyright is not necessarily applicable in the development of UGC in the same manner as other types of content/media produced.

### Collaborative

- Open source software (refers to a model of software production that is premised on making human readable code accessible — includes both “open source software (OSS)” and “Free software” (Most successful examples of projects include Linux, Mozilla Firefox, Apache platform).

- Modders/UGC creators may spend countless hours and effort on their mods; will support each other through websites and forums.
- Mods can aid in increasing the longevity and appeal of a game, as well as customer loyalty.
- Restrictive intellectual property rights (mostly copyright but now also potentially business method patents).
- Crown Copyright in the case of government data.
- Restricted End User Licensing Agreements - EULAs (often pointing to US law).
- TPMs/DRM (and the proposed anti-circumvention rules).
- Liability worries.

### Where Do We Go From Here?

- Conduct further research on the policy and technological infrastructures needed to mobilize and leverage UGC in Canada.
- Conduct further research on the motivations behind UGC and the qualities of popular/viral UGC.
- Examine avenues for effective commercialization and monetization, to gain the value generated by UGC (and do so without hampering the energy and enthusiasm of end users) — searching for effective balancing mechanisms is crucial.

By enabling its populace, Canada will not only create a vibrant and innovative UGC sector, but also facilitate greater cultural expression and economic growth.

**Mobilizing User-Generated Content for Canada’s Digital Content Advantage**


---

**Funded by a SSHRC Knowledge Synthesis Grant on the Digital Economy**