



Scientific Platforms Meeting Networks, Funding & Sustainability



The newly created Canadian Network of Scientific Platforms (CNSP) had their inaugural meeting in Montreal on Tuesday May 9, 2017. More than one hundred researchers, platform scientists and research administrators from across Canada (7 provinces) and abroad (United States, Germany) gathered to discuss how to network, fund and sustain high level scientific platforms that house state-of-the-art infrastructure, highly refined unique scientific expertise and are integral to a high level of success for the research programs of thousands of researchers from across Canada. The network was founded in August of 2016 and currently has 16 member institutions and 95 member scientific platforms from 8 provinces.

A definition of what constitutes a scientific platform and the detailed mandate of the CNSP can be found on the [CNSP Website](#). Briefly, the network aims to promote awareness about the scientific platform (SP) resources available to the community across Canada, educate researchers about SP technologies, develop best practices for the operation and management of SPs, network and exchange ideas, create a cooperative culture in the research community and promote interactions with industry leaders to encourage continued development of SP infrastructure and applications. The SP meeting started off with opportunities to network and the group was very engaged. Information about the CNSP and more established networks such as Euro-BioImaging European and Global networks ([Frederica Paina](#)) were presented and discussed.

The keynote speaker, [Dr. Philip E. Hockberger](#), Assistant Vice President of Research and Executive Director of Research Facilities at Northwestern University in Chicago gave a plenary talk on "[Building a Sustainable Portfolio of Core Facilities](#)". Dr. Hockberger stressed that in order to have strong sustainable scientific platforms (i.e. core facilities) you not only need the state-of-the-art infrastructure but also the world class talent in the people directing, managing and operating the infrastructure. Northwestern has been able to recruit top talent from around the world with the promise of access to infrastructure platforms that are at the leading edge.



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Philip Hockberger, Brent Myron, François Jean, Claire Brown, Sharyn Szick.

Philip Hockberger joined the afternoon panel where the discussion centered around suggestions for funding and sustainability of SPs. The panel was rounded out with [François Jean](#) from the University of British Columbia [Brent Myron](#) from Memorial University and [Sharyn Szick](#) from the CFI. The panelists shared their insights into the

challenges and potential solutions for funding and sustainability. The CFI is currently lobbying the federal government to create a new funding initiative for institutional operation funds (IOF) for the salaries of SP scientific staff and for repairs and maintenance of CFI equipment after the initial 5-year warranty period. The beauty of this proposal is institutions would receive funds based on their 10-year success rate with CFI and could distribute these funds to priority SPs in the institution. There would be no need for researchers or SP managers to spend considerable time to write lengthy grants to receive funding. The group also heard about the challenges and successes of the Facility for Infectious Disease and Epidemic Research ([FINDER](#) BSL-3 laboratory) at the University of British Columbia and the Core Research Equipment & Instrument Training Network ([CREAIT](#)) at Memorial University.

[Philip Hockberger](#) gave a second presentation on how working in a SP is a genuine, valuable and fulfilling career path at Northwestern and set the stage for Canadian institutions to develop similar career tracks for their highly unique and valuable SP research scientists, managers and directors. A second panel discussion on [Scientific Platform Web-resources and Databases](#) and how they can be used to market and gain exposure for SPs wrapped up the afternoon. Attendees heard from [Sharyn Szick](#) about the [CFI Navigator](#) web-based system that lists 530 CFI infrastructure based research facilities at 81 institutions.

[Philip Hockberger](#) introduced the Association of Biomolecular Resource Facilities (ABRF) web-based [Core Marketplace](#) and [Patty King](#) spoke about the Atlantic Facilities & Research Equipment Database ([AFRED](#)) and their plans to expand to become a national infrastructure database. Finally, [Loïck-Alexandre Gautier](#) presented the work that Pôle de recherche et d'innovation en matériaux avancés au Québec ([PRIMA Québec](#)) is doing to bring together industry based scientists and institutional research infrastructure within SPs to maximize their use, as well as maximizing the investment Quebec and federal funding agencies have made in state-of-the-art infrastructure and world class scientific expertise.





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The day finished with a networking dinner at the McGill Faculty club. The attendees and the CNSP executive have a lot of things to assimilate and digest based on the fruitful discussions during the meeting and will come up with an action plan for the CNSP moving forward.

For anyone who wants to get involved stay tuned for more news on future plans and subcommittees on potential topics such as Career Paths, a Survey Committee, Train the Trainer opportunities (e.g. SP management & operations), Outreach Committee.



CNSP Executive Board. Guillaume Lesage (Treasurer), Céline Coderre (Secretary), Claire Brown (President), Marie-Ève Paquet (Central Canada Representative), Laurence Lejeune (Vice President), François Jean (Western Canada Representative), Brent Myron (Eastern Canada Representative).