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## QUANTUM LEAP FORWARD IN SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH

*University of Manitoba-based centre is launching new secure technology for national and international data analysis*

Social scientists face a few hurdles when analyzing and sharing data on health and population information. The data gathered by Statistics Canada and similar agencies can be difficult to process given its massive volume; and there are privacy concerns when it comes to the data's confidential nature.

The pending launch of a dedicated internet network run along a completely private, secure and ultra high-speed connection will change that. The innovative network will connect the twenty-five university-based research data centres belonging to the National Research Data Centre Network: A Quantum Leap Forward in Social Sciences Research.

The project is led by the University of Manitoba and provides researchers across Canada – from Dalhousie to the University of Victoria – with access to social, economic and health data collected by Statistics Canada and other national and provincial agencies. This new technology makes data analysis more efficient and more secure.

“This is a significant infrastructural development for the Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN), with more to come,” said Raymond F. Currie, executive director of the CRDCN at the University of Manitoba.

Funded in part by a \$3.8 million infrastructure award received in 2008 from the Leading Edge Fund of the Canada Foundation for Innovation, this dedicated network will allow for more collaboration among researchers and more complex projects. This project builds on the University of Montreal's Innovation Fund award for the “Research Data Centres/Centre d'accès aux données de recherche” awarded in July 2000 and led by Dr. Paul Bernard.

“Thanks to the CFI award, the technological advances to be carried out in the next five years will position the CRDCN and the University of Manitoba as an international leader in social science research,” said Dr. Digvir S. Jayas, Vice-President (Research) and Distinguished Professor at the University of Manitoba.

“Technology will create an environment allowing researchers to

remove geographical constraints, increase collaboration, make possible more complex research, better share knowledge about data, processes, and set the foundation for researchers to work in national and international networks and partnerships,” said Currie.

CANARIE, Canada’s Advanced Research and Innovation Network, contributed an additional award of up to \$300,000 to bring this project to fruition. “CANARIE is thrilled to bring the power of our advanced network to Canada’s social sciences. Research is changing across all disciplines; it’s becoming more data-driven than ever before. And we hope this is just the first of many social science projects CANARIE can enable,” said CANARIE President and CEO Guy Bujold.

Since 2001, close to 2,700 researchers from thirty academic disciplines have been working in the expanding number of centres. New researchers are accessing the data weekly.

The CRDCN has also taken the lead in training more than 1,000 graduate students in quantitative research skills, and has an ambitious program to make the findings of the research accessible to policy-makers, the media and the general public.

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