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## Publishing and Depository Services Directorate (PDSD)

### Client Satisfaction Survey - Executive Summary

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Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.

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## **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.1 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

The Publishing and Depository Services Directorate (PDSD) maintains a central database of Government of Canada publications that is searchable and available to the public. All institutions of the Government of Canada identified in Schedules I, I.1 and II of the Financial Administration Act are obligated to provide their portable electronic publications to PDSD as identified in the Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada (TBS) Procedures for Publishing.

The Publishing and Depository Services Directorate (PDSD) is responsible for cataloguing publications from Government of Canada departments and agencies. The Directorate's collection includes more than 355,000 bibliographic records, with over 235,000 downloadable electronic publications which can be accessed through the online catalogue via [publications.gc.ca](http://publications.gc.ca). The Weekly Acquisitions List (WAL) is generated at the end of each week based on newly catalogued records from PDSD. A URL linking to the WAL is distributed each Monday via the INFODEP mailing list which consists of clients from public, academic, legislative, special, and government libraries to inform them of the newly catalogued titles. In 2016-2017, the publications website had approximately 150,000 visitors a month and approximately 100,000 publications were downloaded on a monthly basis. Visitors can visit the [publications.gc.ca](http://publications.gc.ca) website, contact PDSD by phone, by mail, by email or by fax.

The Directorate has been in transition for some time. In 2014, the Directorate moved to an exclusively electronic publication environment. More recently with the introduction of the Web Renewal Initiative, and the Open Government Initiative, many changes have occurred and there is ambiguity as to how Government of Canada information is disseminated and through which platform. In this context, the Directorate has had to adapt quickly to a changing environment.

## SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Given these challenges, the PDSD seeks information and insight from key audiences, notably library professionals and other users of the [publications.gc.ca](http://publications.gc.ca) website in order to better position itself for its future role, and to highlight which aspects of its service delivery to focus on. Information is sought in the following key areas for each target audience:

### **Libraries and library professionals**

- How important are government publications to various kinds of libraries, and why?
- How easy or difficult is it for library professionals to locate government publications at present? What issues and problems do they confront?
- Where do library professionals look for Government of Canada publications? Do they consult other websites to find Government of Canada publications?
- How do they assess the dissemination of government publications generally and the PDSD's role in specific? Do they understand the role of the PDSD, and how do they assess its collection, its specific role and the services it provides?
- How do they assess the services and information the PDSD currently provides?
- What concerns do library professionals have about the future, specifically with respect to the changes to government web services and the advent of the Open Information Portal?
- How might the PDSD improve its services and set priorities for the future?

**General public visiting [publications.gc.ca](http://publications.gc.ca)**

- How many visitors coming to [publications.gc.ca](http://publications.gc.ca) are looking for a publication, and what other motives have brought them to the site? Do visitors understand what the publications website offers?

**General public visiting [publications.gc.ca](http://publications.gc.ca) for publications**

- Who are the people downloading publications from the site, and what are their specific needs?
- How well does the site and the PDSD generally serve their needs?
- To what extent do these various kinds of clientele value the services provided by the PDSD? Which specific services, features and communications are valued, and why?
- Do these various kinds of clientele find what they are looking for?
- To what extent do these various kinds of clientele recognize and value the services provided by PDSD?
- Where do they look for Government of Canada publications? Do they consult other websites to find Government of Canada publications?
- How might the PDSD improve its services and set priorities for the future?

The methodology employed in this study consisted of both qualitative and quantitative components. Qualitative interviews by telephone were conducted with PDSD staff to gather information from an internal perspective about the nature of the clientele at PDSD and some of their challenges. Library professionals were queried with on-line bulletin boards, followed by a quantitative survey. Finally, visitors to the publications website ([www.publications.gc.ca](http://www.publications.gc.ca)) were queried via an on-line survey.

## 1.2 STUDY AND ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

One of the immediate and most important findings in this study is that more than half of the visitors to [publications.gc.ca](http://publications.gc.ca) and roughly half of those contacting the PDSD via telephone, email and through other more direct channels are not looking for a publication, but rather a variety of other things – information on general topics, government forms, information on products and services and so on. In this light, adjustments to the analysis framework were necessary. Very obviously, the mixed nature of this clientele has obvious implications for quality of service measurement, not least of which is the need to separate publication seekers from the rest. This is necessary because each clientele is looking for different things and as a result would not evaluate the work of the PDSD in comparable terms. Consequently, the analysis of data from the quantitative survey was done with visitors to [publications.gc.ca](http://publications.gc.ca) to ensure that each topic was assessed with the appropriate clientele.

Accordingly, the different topics addressed in the study were broken down as follows:

- Diagnosis of who is coming to the PDSD, either via the website or other channels was assessed via discussions with PDSD staff and on the site visitor pop-up survey.
- The importance of government publications and other aspects of the PDSD's mission (of maintaining a self-serve capability for example) were assessed via qualitative research with library professionals, and among publication-seeking respondents who answered the site visitor pop-up survey.
- Experience and satisfaction with the web experience was assessed with both clientele on the site visitor pop-up survey
- Experience and satisfaction with the core quality of service as it relates to the delivery of publications and related services was assessed in the site visitor pop-up survey among publication seekers, and among library professionals both in the qualitative bulletin board and in the email survey.
- Finally, satisfaction with the PDSD's responsiveness and overall quality of service vis-à-vis people who contacted the Directorate directly was covered in the site visitor pop-up survey, with all respondents, although publication and non-publication seekers are analyzed separately.

### **1.3 PRINCIPAL FINDINGS**

The principal findings in this study are summarized as follows and presented in the same order as above:

#### ***1.3.1 Flows into the Publications Website***

From this study, we have learned that a minority (42%) of visitors to [publications.gc.ca](http://publications.gc.ca) indicate that they were looking for a publication, and that among this group, almost a third indicated that they were *also* looking for other kinds of information. This means many users of the [publications.gc.ca](http://publications.gc.ca) site were in fact coming to the site in search of something it does not provide. The group of publication seekers is composed of 34% general public users, another 28% of users representing other government organizations, 20% of users from educational institutions, and another 16% from other sources. The general public makes up a bigger (55%) proportion of non-publication seekers, but also includes sizable proportions of government employees (20%), users from education institutions (13%) and another 9% from other places.

From this basic data, the survey seems to indicate that the various conduits to the site, be they search engines, links and so on are sub-optimal. Although our study gives some indication of what pathways these groups used to find the site, we do not have sufficient or the right data to properly diagnose the source of the problem. Our data does suggest, however, that the problem is being experienced by a wide variety of both experienced and inexperienced users, and that it is most likely attributable to several root causes.

### ***1.3.2 Importance of Government Publications***

All audiences who contributed their perspective to this study agree (to only slightly different degrees) that government publications are highly important. Publication-seeking respondents to the pop-up site survey and library professionals indicate as much in their numerical ratings around this question, which in most cases are rated 4 or above on a 5-point scale. The recognition of importance extends not only to publications themselves, but also to aspects of the PDSO mission, notably its self-service focus, maintaining a catalogue and pursuing the digitization of paper publications, maintaining resources necessary to allow users to contact the PDSO directly and so on. Only the maintenance of a weekly listing of publications fell below this threshold, although other qualitative results suggest that it is the frequency of this list that is less important and not the list itself.

Library professionals, for their part, endorse the importance of these aspects even more strongly in the survey, but it is their qualitative perspective that provided the most resonant articulation of the importance of Government of Canada publications and what the PDSO does in their regard: Library professionals deem government publications “*unique*”, of particular resonance, part of an important historical record, and essential to government accountability, an engaged citizenry and the nation’s capacity to learn from the past. Those aspects of the PDSO’s mission, notably its work to identify and catalogue publications, its efforts to ensure compliance with Treasury Board directives and its expertise were also deemed highly important, in particular because of the constant evolutions in the digital world. Library professionals articulated a strong and emphatic imperative around the need for continuity in this record, for comprehensive accounting for the entire body of publications, for durable links and change-resistant archiving, and for consideration of challenges to come and long-term planning to ensure that this material is preserved for posterity. The fact that the majority of surveyed libraries catalogue publications and point to the [publications.gc.ca](http://publications.gc.ca) URL reinforces the point.

### ***1.3.3 Satisfaction with the publications.gc.ca Experience***

Overall satisfaction with the publications website were 3.6/5 among all publication seekers, and dropping to scores in or around 3.2/5 for “*in the end I got what I needed*”, “*the basic search engine capabilities were effective*”, and finally “*It was easy to find what I was looking for.*” These lower scores may reflect the fact that the PDSD doesn’t have what the visitor was looking for (i.e. something other than a document), or that the PDSD isn’t in possession of a document that exists, which can happen for a variety of reasons.

Library professionals, for their part, tend to be more generous in their appraisal of the [publications.gc.ca](http://publications.gc.ca) web experience (overall satisfaction 3.9/5 from a sample of 116 respondents), and favorably inclined about “*I am able to find the Government of Canada publications I am looking for*” (3.7/5).

### ***1.3.4 Satisfaction Among Those Who Contacted the PDSD Directly***

Our data shows that 88 respondents rated their satisfaction following direct contact with the PDSD, either by phone (6% of contacts), email (10% of contacts), by regular mail (1% of contacts) or in person (2% of contacts). This group of 88 respondents further divides between publication-seekers (N=49, or 55%) and non-publication seekers (N=39, or 45%). Though this sample base is too small to rely on for anything other than directional findings, the data suggests that the PDSD staff satisfy groups about equally, even though the requests from non-publication seekers are not what PDSD staff are trained for.

Library professionals, for their part, tend to be more satisfied with the quality of service delivered by PDSD staff for requests made directly: 4.2/5 on the “overall level of satisfaction with the quality of services received.”, and 4.1/5 on “*the amount of time it took to receive the service*”.

## 1.4 CONCLUSIONS

### *Quality of Service*

This study has highlighted the importance of publications to users, and has identified some of the issues and obstacles that the PDSD's clientele faces in their quest for Government of Canada publications. In particular, the study shows that those seeking publications encountered challenges with aspects of the web experience, and with things such as the search capabilities and the overall ease in finding their desired publication. When these users make direct contact with the Directorate, however, they indicate relatively high levels of satisfaction with the *personal* aspects of the service. All of this suggests that finding a publication and other information in the Government of Canada web environment is a process that can be improved.

### *Larger Web Structures and Navigation Toward the Publications Site*

Although the underlying reasons are not clear, this study has demonstrated that the larger web structures surrounding [publications.gc.ca](http://publications.gc.ca) and the various tools and methods that are used to direct users toward the right kinds of government information are sub-optimal. While a diagnosis on how and why this is happening is beyond the scope of this project and the data, it is important to recognize the potential impact of so many non-publication seekers on our estimation of the quality of service the PDSD provides. It has been necessary to carefully differentiate users between publication and non-publication seekers, and to ensure that only those users with an intent to find a publication evaluate the PDSD's service. The root causes of this mixed clientele are not illuminated by our data. That said, the fact that non-publication seekers come from government organizations (20%) and from educational institutions (13%) as well as the general public (55%) suggests that the problem is experienced by all comers. Additional research (which would presumably be part of the government's ongoing efforts to perfect its web offer) on how users of all kinds think of and decode the offer of "publications" relative to the specific topics they seek information on would warrant consideration.

*The Importance of Government Publications and Library Professionals' Contribution*

Finally, this study has provided rich and compelling evidence from library professionals about the importance of Government of Canada publications and especially of preserving this body of information for posterity. The library professionals who participated in this study, either by way of the bulletin board or the survey articulate similar imperatives:

- Comprehensive capture of existing publications – be they in print form or electronic is important, *especially* in light of the constant and predictable pace of evolution in information technology and Internet structures.
- Stability in how these files are referenced (links) and stored over the long term is essential.
- Work to ensure that this body of information is more easily and centrally discoverable is important. A general theme to emerge is that a singular source (“one-stop shop”) is ideal, and that the PDSD is, so far, the organization that comes closest to achieving this aim despite its relative imperfections.

Finally, library professionals provided a wealth of suggestions and recommendations on how to better achieve these aims which are accessible in the annex of this report.