

Dams, drugs, dissemination and demographics

Management provides a peek into the range of research occurring across our Faculty's four schools

School of Information Management

The digital age has left many of us drowning in data and information. Researchers, in particular, can easily spend millions of dollars of public money producing groundbreaking research – only to discover policy-makers remain unaware of their report.

This is something that Bertrum MacDonald is hoping to change. A professor of Information Management, Bertrum has assembled a 12-strong interdisciplinary team dedicated to tracking the awareness and use of environmental marine research – as well as its influence on policies designed to help save our oceans.

Explains Bertrum: "There is a wealth of scientific information that tells us how we could mitigate the deterioration of our oceans.

But the policy-makers aren't always making use of them. Our research strives to find out where the momentum gets lost between research being published and that information finding its way into the hands of decision-makers."

Backed by a significant three-year grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Bertrum's team makes the most of our Faculty's breadth to bring together people from a range of backgrounds – from information management to public policy to environmental research.

"Our team's diversity allows us to approach every problem from multiple angles, which is vital when dealing with such complex and unpredictable flows of information," he says. "The fact that we come from different experiences really capitalizes on our creativity."

School for Resource and Environmental Studies

Located 15 km north of the New Brunswick city of Fredericton, the Mactaquac Dam uses the Saint John River to generate approximately 12 percent of that province's power requirements.

Completed in 1968, the dam is nearing the end of its life – a development that has sparked increasing public controversy about whether the dam should be refurbished, decommissioned or perhaps even demolished. Demolishing would 're-wild' the river and also remove the 100 km-long headpond created by the dam.

But what about the region's residents? Do they have a clear preference for the dam and its head pond?

To find out, Dr. Kate Sherren and her small team of researchers spent some of August 2013 cruising the headpond with members of the public who use it or live near it.



(R to L) Dr. Tom Beckley (UNB), co-investigator and Dr. Kate Sherren (son George) with their research assistants

Explains Kate: "New Brunswick has some big decisions to make about its energy infrastructure. People living near the dam have a lot to gain and a lot to lose depending on who they are and how the dam and headpond affect them. Before any decisions can be made effectively, we need to find out how people feel about it.

"For the first half of the cruise, we gave people recording devices and encouraged them simply to respond to the landscape – to point out the features that mean the most to them, to tell stories about it and so on. Then, on the way back, our research took a much tighter focus – specifically, a focus group about the region's landscape and its energy choices," she says.

"Ultimately, our research allowed us to generate a more grassroots-level dialogue – and will enable policy-makers and planners to make better-informed and more democratic decisions on this issue and around the province's energy use going forward."

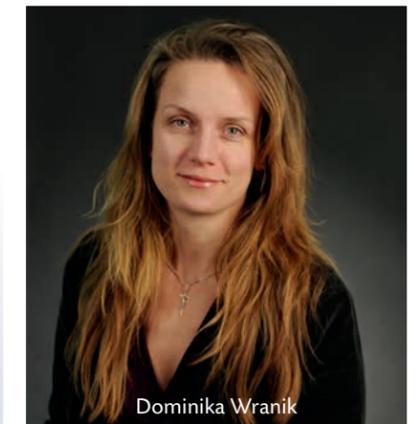
Rowe School of Business

Nova Scotia's pending skill shortage and its aging population means our province needs to find ways of extending the careers of older workers. But how well are employees 55 and older able to keep up in a changing workplace? Why are some better at it than others? And how, ultimately, can employers help them adapt?

To answer these and other questions, Prof. Ed Ng conducted an in-depth analysis of workers aged 55 to 64, publishing his findings this year in the *Canadian Journal on Aging* under the title *Keeping Up! Older Workers' Adaptations in the Workplace after Age 55*.

Among its key findings, the study revealed that older workers use a range of strategies to adapt, most of them successfully. "For example," says Ed, "older workers substitute the loss of cognitive resources, physical functioning and mental wellbeing with gains in perspective, experience and fortitude. Meanwhile, older workers who focus on future time perspectives find new purposes and possibilities that enhance their subjective wellbeing."

School of Public Administration
The pan-Canadian Oncology Drug Review (pCODR) is an evidence-based review process designed to bring consistency and clarity to the assessment of cancer drugs. The pCODR reviews clinical evidence, cost-effectiveness and patient perspectives then uses this information to make recommendations to Canada's provinces and territories (other than Quebec) – recommendations that guide cancer-drug funding decisions.



Dominika Wranik

Dominika Wranik, a professor in our Faculty's School of Public Administration, leads a team of researchers seeking to understand how the pCODR – an interdisciplinary and formulary body – weighs clinical, economic and other types of information.

Explains Dominika: "A pilot study of a similar formulary committee in Nova Scotia revealed economic evidence isn't used to its full potential – both because of technical challenges and a lack of trust in studies sponsored by the pharmaceutical industry.

"To address this, we are working on a conceptual framework that will improve the use of economic evidence by formulary committees and support consistent and transparent decision processes. Our results will support the pCODR process specifically, and drug-funding decision processes in general."