

Buried Treasure

Canada's hidden history unearthed

Starting this year, York scholars will be unearthing a trove of Canada's hidden history: previously unprocessed census records for the 40-year period from 1911 to 1951. Based at York and six other Canadian universities, the five-year Canadian Century Research Infrastructure (CCRI) project will develop databases derived from census records and other sources, such as newspaper reports and legislative debates.

Mining 40 years' worth of information should yield valuable insights into the country's social, economic and cultural shifts, says Gordon Darroch, sociology professor and York's CCRI centre director. "It will give us new insights into things like the changing character of labour, housing, immigration, families, education and urbanization," Darroch says.

Among other topics, the data should also paint a clearer picture of children's lives in those years, says Evelyn Ruppert, centre coordinator. "Children and youth are mostly absent from even well-documented historical archives. CCRI databases will enable research about their changing lives in the 20th century." The national project's databases will be available to students and researchers via the Web, and will link with existing census databases covering the years from 1871 to 2001. ■

