

Special PSAC Meeting
Thursday, September 3, 2009
Killam Library – G62

Present: Jennifer Adams, Ann Barrett, James Boxall, Geoff Brown, Marc Comeau, Patrick Ellis, Sharon Longard, Bill Maes, Ann Morrison, Fran Nowakowski, Michelle Paon, Helen Powell, Jo-Ann Riggs, Karen Smith, Tina Usmiani, Helen Wojcik

Bill advised the group that he wanted to hold this meeting so staff could begin thinking about and discussing how the Libraries should be preparing for a potential H1N1 pandemic. The University's focus is on the students and how to keep classes going. They are not thinking in terms of the infrastructure, e.g. computing services, facilities management services, etc. What can the Libraries do in the event large numbers of staff are sick – how do we cope and keep the libraries running?

Bill asked Patrick, who the Libraries' representative is on the University's Academic Continuity Planning Group (ACPG), to speak to the documents that Patrick had distributed to the group.

Patrick's overview

- The Academic Continuity Planning Group's focus is definitely the curriculum and keeping classes going. Patrick referred staff to an e-mail distributed today by Alan Shaver, Vice-President (Academic & Provost) re "Pandemic H1N1 Influenza Advisory in relation to Academic Continuity". Patrick advised that within CAUT (Canadian Association of University Teachers) Dalhousie volunteered to take a leadership role in dealing with a possible pandemic.
- A sub-committee of the ACPG (Triage Committee of which Patrick is also a member) has been established to determine the impact of a possible pandemic on public services
 - social distancing – how to politely suggest sick staff/students stay (or go) home
 - need clear information public service stations were to find tissues, hand sanitizers, etc.
 - promoting our responsibilities and those of others
- Information Technology Services (formerly UCIS) is very interested in working with Libraries staff in the event of illness – Marc will work with ITS staff to come up with a plan
- The possibility of purchasing keyboard covers was mentioned. Patrick advised he has spoken with staff in Dentistry who have used the plastic covers but found they didn't work very well – they still got very dirty – Dentistry does not recommend these covers. They have purchased glass keyboards.
- Patrick advised that Ray Ison, Director of the University's Environmental Health & Safety Office, has a budget to purchase wipes that will be distributed throughout campus. Once these wipes are received they will be shipped to Patrick who will be responsible for distributing them to the Libraries. The wipes are intended to be used to clean keyboards and mice in public areas in the Libraries (recommended this be done twice per day).
- The Libraries will need to prioritize what services would be maintained in the event of a pandemic.
- The University is looking a virtual delivery of classes if necessary.
- The Libraries need to get word out to faculty regarding the electronic resources the Libraries have that are available to them to support classroom continuity.

Bill asked the group to consider what issues we haven't considered that might affect us. The following suggestions were brought forth:

- librarians committed to teaching classes – will other staff be expected to teach classes for sick colleagues?
 - on an as you are able basis depending on familiarity with subject?
- this issue is similar to issues facing faculty
- could use Blackboard (should use?)
- our LibGuides will be very beneficial but how useful will they be if we aren't there to backup
- it was suggested that librarians who teach in each library should meet and produce a schedule of their teaching commitments and then have a meeting of all teaching librarians from all libraries
 - teaching needs to be priority
 - create podcasts of teaching sessions?
 - link existing podcasts to Blackboard?
- it was suggested that if several Reference desk staff were to be sick the reference desks could be closed and reference service would be offered through LiveHelp only

We need a back-up plan – we do have the technology to make some of these things happen.

Bill asked Marc for his thoughts from a systems perspective.

- Marc advised that lots can be done remotely and that both the proxy and web servers would support some of what has been discussed.
- Marc is quite happy to work with Dwight Fischer and ITS staff to determine a plan for supporting each other in the event of a pandemic that might affect either department's staff. In fact Systems has already relied on ITS staff for help during David Miffen's vacations.
- Marc feels that due to the staff time involved, cleaning of public keyboards and mice twice per day is not practical in the Killam

Further discussion took place regarding the cleaning of keyboards, mice, telephones, etc. , specifically, who's responsibility would this be? how often should it be done? it was determined that more discussion needs to happen regarding this issue.

Bill raised the issue of cleaning in general in the Libraries should custodial staff be hit hard by this flu.

Tina talked to the group re communication:

- we need to have a good communication plan which needs to be coordinated with what's happening on campus -- how do the Libraries fit in?
- education – provide information and information resources
- iphone app – “outbreak near me” – plug in where you are and the program shows any recent outbreaks near you
- Libraries need one spot (on web page) for providing information in a timely manner
- Tina advised that she can send this information electronically directly to the residences
- there is a Communications Council meeting next week – Tina will report back any discussions held regarding a possible flu pandemic
- Libraries need to be consistent with signage, posters, etc., and need to be prepared to deal with panic and over reaction. We should keep things low-key and deal with events as they unfold.

Should we be starting to use wipes now?

Next step – Bill to establish a small committee with representatives from each library. This committee would then be responsible for identifying issues that could be referred to the ACPG if we are unable to resolve them ourselves.

Meeting adjourned at 4:15 pm