

Library Council – Annual Report 2013-2014

Dalhousie University Libraries

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Shelley McKibbon & Lindsay McNiff (Chairs)

Introduction

The second Annual Report of the Dalhousie Libraries Library Council covers the period of September 2013 – June 2014. Shelley McKibbon served as Chair from October to December, and Lindsay McNiff assumed the role from January until Council’s final meeting in June. We would both like to extend our admiration and thanks to Gwyn Pace, our exceptional secretary for the full duration.

Overview and Statistics

Library Council met a total of eleven times during the period covered by this report. As per the Terms of Reference, Council did not meet during July and August 2013. There was one special meeting called on October 21, 2013 so Council members could formally meet the new university President, Dr. Richard Florizone. Subsets of Council members met on March 25th and May 14th to discuss questions around the role of Council and its relationship to Committees. Quorum was not established during the May meeting.

The membership stipulated by the ToR included as voting members all those holding appointments as academic librarians in the Dalhousie Libraries System, the GIS Director, the Intellectual Property Officer, Systems Developers, and all members of SMT except the University Librarian and the AUL members of SMT, who are non-voting ex-officio Council members. The total attending membership of Council during this period was 38 members. Attendance at Council meetings averaged 26 attendees per meeting this year, which represents a decrease in attendance from our inaugural year, during which attendance averaged 29 attendees per meeting. The attendance high this year was 30 members in the October regular meeting, and the attendance low was 18 members at the May meeting. Quorum was not achieved in the May meeting and issues requiring a vote were postponed until June.

Attending Council members 2013 – 2014

Jennifer Adams	Sandy Dwyer	Anne Matthewman	Sarah Stevenson
Linda Aiken	Patrick Ellis	Shelley McKibbon	Margaret Vail
Ann Barrett	Allison Fulford	Lindsay McNiff	
Creighton Barrett	Melissa Helwig	David Michels	
James Boxall	Mark Lewis	Michael Moosberger	
Geoff Brown	Jason MacDonald	Gwyn Pace	
Linda Bedwell	Heather MacFadyen	Michelle Paon	
Donna Bourne-Tyson	Elaine MacInnis	Robin Parker	
Geoff Brown	Marlo MacKay	Phyllis Ross	
Ian Colford	Oriel MacLennan	Dominic Silvio	
Marc Comeau	Gwendolyn MacNairn	Janice Slauenwhite	
Sarah Jane Dooley	Joyline Makani	Karen Smith	

Council approved the Terms of Reference for three standing committees: the Scholarly Resources Management Group, the Discovery Layer Team, and the Dalhousie Libraries Research Advisory Committee. The User Experience & Assessment Committee revised its Terms of Reference, and these

revisions were approved by Council in September. Council struck a working group to revise our Terms of Reference after the first year; these revisions were approved by Council in November. Council also approved a set of *Guidelines for Digitization Project Planning*, the Communications Committee *Communications Plan for 2013 – 2015*, and a formalized *Gift Policy* that is now posted on the Libraries website. Council also expressed support for the *Assessment Priorities* document developed by the User Experience & Assessment Committee.

Council continues to function as an effective communication venue for the Libraries, providing a monthly forum for members to update each other on system-wide and library-specific activities as well as individual projects and research endeavors. Discussions this year included building renovations and space changes, Sharepoint implementation, resource changes, new finding aids, collections allocation formula models, new positions, and budget updates. Council once again provided an opportunity for members to deliver formal presentations on their research, committee work, and items of concern for the libraries. Gwendolyn MacNairn's sabbatical research, "Focus on the Mobile Experience," which explored the use of mobile devices to access library resources, was one of such presentations. The monthly Community Update continues to function well in providing short snapshots of what everyone is doing.

In October, Council held a Special Meeting to meet formally as a group with the new University President, Dr. Richard Florizone. This meeting provided a fruitful opportunity for members to voice their thoughts to the President on a variety of issues including the plans for the new physical spaces of the Health Sciences Library; expectations of tangential community groups for access to library resources; the evolving roles of the libraries; the strains on current physical space and services in the libraries; the ongoing challenge of meeting student needs in a time of shrinking budgets.

Council hosted two other guests this year. Jessica Chubb, the coordinator for the Studying for Success Program, presented during the January meeting about the workshops and tutoring options available to students. The May Council meeting provided a forum for Master of Library and Information Science practicum student Andrea Kampen to launch the new *Welcome to the Dal Libraries* video she created during her practicum placement.

While Library Council has been an effective venue for information exchange, feedback received by the 2012/2013 Chair and noted in last year's Annual Report suggests that Council should move beyond that. Discussions beginning in the March meeting and continuing through to the end of the term suggests there is some unrest and debate over the function of Council.

Issues Arising

Committees of Library Council

As is inevitable of any newly-formed group, Council experienced some healthy impediments this year. When Council was considering the Terms of Reference for a new committee, the question of whether Library Council, as purely an advisory committee, could establish Committees with decision-making power generated a wide ranging discussion and introduced some speculation into the purview of committees, their responsibility to Library Council, and the role of Library Council as a whole. Two Special Meetings were held to investigate the issue (which quickly grew into a number of different questions and considerations), and discussions spanned our need to distinguish between Teams and

Committees, the operational and advisory functions of committees, how committees should be structured, and to whom or what body committees were responsible.

Committees and the AULs

As noted in last year's Annual Report, the role of AULs has implications for committee structure. Although we have yet to establish clear guidelines on the role of AULs on committees, most committees have now moved toward a model in which the associated AUL is an ex-officio member. This is an outstanding issue that needs to be formally resolved.

The Role of Library Council

The discussion of committees, their decision-making power, and their responsibilities to Council and SMT gave rise to questions of whether Library Council should continue as purely an advisory body. The prevailing model for most other library councils appears to be one in which the council functions as an advisory body; however, some members would like to see Council grow and evolve into a decision-making body. The University Librarian has spoken approvingly about this possibility, should it ever be pursued by Council. This is not an endeavor to be taken lightly, as Council members would have to be prepared to take on the responsibility of a decision-making body, which would require commitment beyond monthly meetings and information sharing.

Conclusion

At the conclusion of its second year, Library Council is still a relatively new entity working to define itself. Council's function as a communication channel for librarians and staff at Dalhousie's five libraries, while clearly effective and beneficial, perhaps presents a limited view of what Council could become. While unofficial consensus seems to suggest that Council is not yet ready to move beyond its advisory and communicatory function, there is also the sense that as an advisory body Library Council needs to be reinvigorated, and needs to stimulate more interest and investment from members. Given the high turnout and lively discussion at the Special Meetings held around this issue, we are confident that the interest is there and we look forward to continuing the conversation as Library Council evolves.

Finally, we would like to thank the members of Library Council for cultivating a collegial and respectful Council environment, and for giving us the opportunity to serve as Chairs. We would like to welcome Dominic Silvio to the role of Chair and Sarah Stevenson to the role of Secretary for the 2014/2015 year.