

# Libraries Survey 2019

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RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

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# Libraries Survey 2019: Recommendations

## Background & What We Do Well

The Dal Libraries Survey (Insync) was conducted from January 28<sup>th</sup> to February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Within a few weeks of closing, Insync sent a summary report, a 311-page results report, along with our data files. The summary report only provided macro-level results based on the entire respondent group, which, as with most library surveys, is not representative of the entire user community. The 311-page report was cumbersome for most to extract meaningful data. Further data analysis was then performed and “quick reports” were produced for each Head and Associate Dean, along with reports for ATS and Communications. These reports highlighted areas that required action. This recommendations report gathers these actionable results into one report. (All data and reports may be found at O:\Libraries - System-Wide Accessible Information\Assessment\2019 Insync Survey. Additional files are available upon request.)

First, we need to acknowledge and congratulate ourselves on very positive results in the areas of our strengths: instruction, communications, document delivery, interactions with front-line staff, online and in-person help, and wifi. Gap scores (the difference between average Importance and Performance scores) were well below 1.0 – the threshold at which Insync recommends action. Based on our history of LibQual surveys, these are areas that we consistently do well in. Let’s acknowledge that we are rock stars when it comes to these aspects of our work. Also, analysis of the survey data showed that at least for later-year undergraduates there is a significant positive correlation between frequency of online library use and grades (i.e., the more they access the library online, the better their grades).

And now we need to turn our attention to areas where our users are struggling and asking us to change.

## List of Recommendations

Here is the list of recommendations in brief form. Further details are provided in the corresponding sections that follow.

1. **Group study spaces** – Prioritize providing more group study spaces at all locations except the MacRae and Law libraries.
2. **CHEB and Killam** – Monitor seating availability during peak times to follow up on complaints that both buildings lack enough study space.
3. **Law Library** – Consider solutions for improving the quiet and replace troublesome furniture with ergonomic options.
4. **Sexton Library** – Build anew or redesign with user needs assessment and design input.

5. **WMLC** - Improve laptop facilities (desks, outlets, etc.).
6. **Hours** – Extend hours in one Halifax location to satisfy demands from all groups, particularly from Law students and first generation students.
7. **Electrical outlets** – Conduct an accessibility review of electrical outlets for each library location.
8. **Printing** – Review survey comments and conduct usability tests of printing procedures and instructions to improve ease of use and printer reliability.
9. **Website and mobile site** - When redesigning our website and mobile site, ensure that assessment activities (UX/user needs/design input/feedback) include representation from groups identified in this report.
10. **Search box** – Improve UX and functionality of the search box beginning with discussions with subject liaisons regarding its efficacy and suitability.
11. **Information resources** – Review two types of Insync comments: those concerning weaknesses in our collection to determine exactly in which research areas respondents feel it is deficient, and comments bemoaning the lack of access to online resources that other Novanet institutions have access to. If our e-resources can't be expanded to provide the same access then we must improve upon the UX of our search and access functions.
12. **Under-represented students** - Insync data for under-represented students should be consulted and further analyzed when considering changes to, or redesign, of services, tools and spaces. Working with the EDIA committee, further assessment activities with these groups is also recommended.
13. **Users with a (dis)ability** - Create or assign a liaison/representative role to keep this group's needs in the forefront. All new/redesigned services, tools and spaces must have the input of members of this user group.
14. **Interdisciplinary studies** - A liaison should be appointed to ensure this group is adequately served and represented and to investigate their dissatisfaction with course-specific resources.
15. **Awareness and UX** – Improve outreach and ease of use, possibly by redesigning our services, tools and spaces with UX in mind, employing principles of human-centred design and UX-based assessment.
16. **Use of comments** – The Insync comment files provide insight beyond the quantitative data and should be reviewed by all units/departments for potential further action. This dataset should also be consulted for user feedback when considering changes to services, spaces and resources.

17. **Next Libraries Survey** – The next survey should be conducted in winter 2023. The survey tool chosen should include questions pertaining to weaknesses identified in this survey and other assessment studies. Further refining the list of under-represented students should be considered.

## Our Spaces

We have been entrusted to provide adequate study spaces for our user community, notably students. In every survey since 2003, and in other space assessment studies, they have told us our spaces are inadequate.

**Quiet and group space** were issues at all locations except the MacRae & Law libraries. Gap scores were higher for group space and related comments were double to quintuple the quiet-related comments depending on the location. Based on evidence gathered in space assessments, groups end up working in quiet spaces because they can't find appropriate collaborative space elsewhere, and therefore they disrupt the quiet. Group space solutions should be prioritized and implemented with the expectation that these solutions will help improve the quiet spaces. Also, when looking at data for under-represented student groups, students with a (dis)ability had a gap score larger than the well-represented students. This warrants further investigation and input from students with a (dis)ability when designing new group spaces.

There were many complaints that the **CHEB and the Killam** need more study space in general, that users cannot find seats at the busiest times. Seating availability should be monitored at peak times to verify this complaint. (Additional classroom space has been freed up for study use at the CHEB since the survey was conducted.)

The **Law Library** needs to improve quiet spaces, and hours were also particularly problematic with a gap score of 2.09 which falls into Insync's "serious" category that "should be prioritized and acted upon". Both should be further investigated for solutions as well as the several requests in the comments for adjustable/ergonomic furniture.

While gap scores for **hours** for other locations were low, the large number of negative comments concerning library hours at all locations told a different story. First generation students in particular left many comments pertaining to hours. Extending hours in one location could resolve this overall dissatisfaction, possibly even for the Law Library users.

The **Sexton Library** stands out as needing the most improvements with very high gap scores for quiet, group space, laptop facilities (mostly lack of outlets), and computers. This was the one location with great dissatisfaction with computer availability. (The Law and MacRae exceeded user expectations when it came to computers and could consider removing some after usage analysis, possibly to be used at the Sexton.) The Sexton Library requires a full redesign with user needs assessment and design input.

Improvements to laptop facilities (i.e., desks, outlets, etc.) are required at the **WMLC**. A recommendation for laptop stations has been made in a separate assessment report for the Killam. Similar stations could be positioned in the WMLC during or following a pilot study at the Killam. Particular attention should be paid to

accessibility of laptop station design as well as **positioning of electrical outlets** throughout the library spaces since gap scores provided by students with (dis)abilities were above 1.0. Input on laptop facilities from Indigenous Students may also be helpful as they too flagged this as an issue.

**Printing, scanning & photocopying services** were flagged by students with (dis)abilities as needing improvement. A review of their comments mostly indicated frustrations with the printers not working. Comments from other groups indicated that instructions were not easy to follow. Usability testing and improvements to instructions should improve ease of use and printer reliability.

## Our Website and Mobile Site

While the website was only unsatisfactory to one group (Inter-disciplinary students), “access by mobile device” was unsatisfactory for several user groups: Arts & Social Science, Dentistry, and “other” students, students with (dis)abilities, first generation students, LGBTQ2SIA+ students, “other minority” students, and library staff. International students, although generally satisfied with mobile access, placed a significantly high level of importance on it. Regarding the website, first generation, LGBTQ2SIA+ and Black students scored a significantly high importance. The web-renewal team should include representation from these groups when conducting assessment activities for user needs, design input, feedback and UX.

## Our Search Box

“Ease of use of the search box” was flagged by faculty, non-degree students, and library staff and deserves further investigation and possibly assessment. Negative comments about the search box centered around lack of user-friendliness, results being too broad, and negative comparisons to other institutions’ search features. Discussions should begin with liaisons regarding the search box’s efficacy and suitability. Is it the best option for our students?

According to Insync data, the search box is heavily used by students so we need to carefully consider if/how our online resources and access tools can work best with this search behaviour. First generation students placed a significantly high importance on it. When asked what they used for their research, the library search box was within the top three for all user groups. It was the most selected option by graduate students, library staff, staff, and “other”. It came in second for undergraduates, post-graduates, non-degree students and faculty. (Google/Google Scholar was the most selected option by undergrads.) It was the first for students in Agriculture, Architecture, Arts and Social Sciences, and Health; while Google/Google Scholar was first for students in Computer Science, Dentistry, Engineering, Interdisciplinary, Management, and Science. (If curious about where LibGuides fits in, less than half the number who reported using the search box and Google Scholar reported using LibGuides.) (More data is included in the Insync Quick Report for Resources.)

## Our Information Resources

Faculty were dissatisfied with “information resources available from the library” and their gap score for “e-journals are easy to use” was just below the threshold for requiring action. Further assessment should be carried out to determine exact areas of dissatisfaction within the collection. This would be a significant project and could be delayed until after the next library survey. In the meantime, Insync comments should be read to see which areas we are deficient in according to respondents. There were also many comments from all user-types concerning the lack of access to online resources that they can see other Novanet institutions have access to. These comments should be considered as well, if not for ways to improve the collection, but to improve upon the user search and access experience.

## Under-represented Students

Recommendations given in this report have included references to under-represented student groups who either had gap scores above 1.0 or gave importance scores that were significantly higher than well-represented students. The Quick Report for Under-represented Students should be consulted for further information when re-designing services, tools and spaces and conducting related assessment activities. Further analysis of comments should also be performed. Additional consultation/assessment studies with these groups to better understand their needs and experiences with the Libraries should be prioritized.

## Students with a (dis)ability

Data analysis revealed that this student group is struggling with the Libraries more so than any other group, having the largest gap scores for most of the survey items. (See the Quick Report for Under-represented Students for all findings.) Their gap scores exceed 1.0 when it comes to laptop facilities, access via a mobile device, and printing/scanning/photocopying. They are also one of several under-represented groups who struggle more when it comes to quiet and group study spaces. They provided many comments about the lack of true quiet space, including mentions of a need for quiet/no distractions for those with ADD/ADHD. Accessibility issues with the building, complaints regarding the heavy Killam doors, furniture requirements, particularly the need for standing desks, were also highlighted in their comments and one respondent indicated their physical difficulty in reaching outlets to plug their laptop in. In addition, gap scores for students with a (dis)ability were very high for accessing library resources through Brightspace and accessing resources from off-campus. With this much data indicating that we are not meeting their needs in several areas, it is recommended that we create a liaison/representative role to keep this groups’ needs in the forefront. Further assessment/consultation with this group is also warranted to further our understanding of the survey’s findings and their needs and user experience.

## Inter-Disciplinary Students

Course-specific resources, along with the website, were issues for interdisciplinary students. This group also had a gap score just below the action threshold for “being informed about library services” and had the highest gap score of all the study areas for many of the Insync questions. A liaison for interdisciplinary studies should be appointed to ensure this group is adequately served and represented and to investigate problems with course-specific resources.

## Awareness & User Experience (UX)

While all communications-related questions received healthy scores from all groups, commenters indicated their lack of awareness of library resources & services, in some cases learning about them through the survey itself. There were also comments regarding inadequate instructions for library-related tasks such as locating books in the building, using printers, etc. We should consider ways to improve outreach and ease of use. We may want to redesign some of our services, resources, tools and spaces with UX in mind, employing principles of human-centred design and UX-based assessment.

## Use of Comments

2,771 of the 6,684 respondents left rich comments. This dataset of comments should be consulted when considering changes/re-design/further assessment activities, related but not limited to: website, spaces, hours, search & access, resources, etc. Each AD has received a comment file and a copy is also available on the shared drive.

## Next Dal Libraries Survey

Pain points identified by the 2019 survey should be flagged for comparison in a future Libraries survey (winter 2023 recommended). The library survey offerings on the market are changing again. The survey tool chosen should include questions pertaining to the areas included in these recommendations for longitudinal comparison purposes.

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