

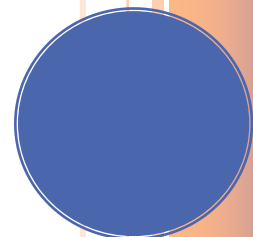
STUDENT INPUT & FEEDBACK TEAM

Year-End Report 2017-18

Summary of Results and Follow-up Recommendations

Linda Bedwell & Marlo MacKay
Co-chairs, SIFT

6-Nov-18



Student Input & Feedback Team

Year-End Report 2017-18

BACKGROUND

In July 2016, Dalhousie Libraries revamped the Student Advisory Group and created the Student Input & Feedback Team (SIFT) – a series of open feedback sessions (similar to focus groups) on each campus. This better fulfilled recommendation 10.1 from the 2016 Senate and external review that stated: "The Libraries, perhaps through the Office of the University Librarian, should create some kind of formal consultation process with the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) and the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students (DAGS) to have a recognized conduit for student advice regarding changes in services and space on campus."

This year we repeated the structure for the SIFTs as we did last year: holding a meeting on each campus where students could drop in, have a slice of pizza and talk about their experiences in the libraries. Last year the meetings were structured around three themes: spaces, services, and collections. Based on the results, we decided this year to focus on some of the findings from last year and drill deeper down to discover more about student behaviour around preparing for research assignments and their awareness of research assistance (RA) and document delivery. We also built in any additional questions pertaining to the particular location of each session. The Law Library does not hold SIFTs, relying instead on their steady relationship with and feedback from their student groups. The MacRae Library decided not to hold a SIFT this year on account of their renovations (knowing that the bulk of the feedback would relate to the renovations in progress). This year, however, we did add a "pilot" online SIFT with Social Work students; the results of which will appear in a separate report. We opted out of conducting a final-wrap-up meeting based on our experience from last year.

All meetings were audio-recorded and the notes were later transcribed. Students signed a consent form and the recordings were deleted once the notes were made. Students were asked to fill in a name plate upon joining the meeting that stated their program and year of study. In all cases, except the Killam SIFT, someone representing the host library was in attendance at each meeting, along with both of the co-chairs of SIFT (the facilitators), and an assistant to take notes and welcome late comers.

Meeting location and date	Number of attendees
SEXTON Wednesday, November 22, 2017, 12–1 p.m. Room D415, D Building, Sexton Campus	8 students Civil Engineering (1) Electrical Engineering (1) Internetworking (4) Unknown (2)
WALLACE MCCAIN LEARNING COMMONS Wednesday, November 29, 2017, 12–1 p.m.	6 students Biology (1)

Science Academic Resource Centre, WMLC	Commerce (1) Gender Studies (1) Chemistry (1) Management & Sustainability (1) Unknown (1)
Kellogg Library Learning Commons Monday, January 22, 2018, 3:15–4:15 p.m. C265, CHEB	10 students Health Promotion (4) Pharmacy (3) Dentistry (2) Nursing (1)
Killam Library Wednesday, January 31, 2018, 12–1 p.m. G70, Killam	9 students Arts & Social Sciences (3) Science (3) TYP (1) Neuroscience (1) Nursing (1)

FEEDBACK SUMMARY

Awareness of Research Assistance

Carleton (KLLC)

Roughly 2/3rds of the group felt comfortable doing research, several of them mentioning the in-class sessions they received. It was also thanks to these in-class sessions that they knew about RA. 2 stated that their professor gave bonus points for attending the in-class library session and also offered preferred times. The 2 from Dentistry said they haven't had research assignments yet, or in-class sessions. 1 student stated that she often hears about the Writing Centre through classes and professors and fellow students, and sees signs and receives emails about it, but there is less "advertising" about the library.

Studley

WMLC – 2 of the 6 students said they were comfortable with doing research, 1 said it depends on the difficulty of the research topic, 3 said they did not feel prepared, while 1 mentioned difficulties as an exchange student and suggested an info event specifically for exchange students. Only 2 students remained when the question regarding awareness of RA was asked. 1 was aware while the other was not.

Killam – In general, attendees indicated they felt comfortable with doing research. 1 student spoke highly of an in-class session with a librarian and said their professor encouraged them to see the librarian for RA. A significant amount of time was then spent discussing laptop theft and the building in general, and it was inconclusive how many attendees were aware of RA.

Sexton

All but 2 students felt generally prepared to do research for papers. 1 felt he didn't know where to start, while the other stated he felt overwhelmed with keyword searching in Novanet. All knew that RA was available at the desk, stating that students tell each other about it. 1 stated he doesn't feel the need to ask for help, while 1 suggested holding an info session in a class to inform students about it.

Awareness of Document Delivery

Carleton (KLLC)

In general, the attendees all had various levels of awareness of document delivery but no one had a full awareness of the service. 3 mentioned that they simply don't use it because they just move on if the article isn't readily available. They were not aware that most requests are filled within 24 hours.

Studley

WMLC – Only 2 people remained at the time of this question; both were not aware of the service. One suggested informing students of the service later in the semester, when needed.

Killam – Only 1/3rd were aware of document delivery, and 1 student said they used it but wasn't aware they had used it at the time (they received assistance from staff at SMU). 1 asked where they would see the service online.

Sexton

While 1 student stated that they always seem to get the items they need directly at Dal, 3 of the 8 said they did not know about document delivery or interlibrary loans.

Spaces

Carleton (CHEB)

1 student suggested more group study spaces and white boards, noting that study rooms can be hard to get, as well as the “pens” (even though they are less desirable since they aren’t enclosed). 1 student complained about lack of food options. 1 suggested there should be prayer space in either the CHEB or KLLC, and 2 students mentioned 24 hour access and appreciated Night Owls.

Studley

WMLC – There were several positive comments about the WMLC, particularly the windows, and brightness. They requested that the LC could stay open later. They also requested to book rooms sooner than just a week ahead, and then recognized that this could cause the rooms to get booked up. They also commented on the Killam, saying they have a preference for the 4-person tables in the hallways, saying they are more cosy, warmer and comfortable. They did not like the individual tables, saying they were chilly and didn’t like having their screens visible to people walking behind them. One said the Killam is their least favourite to study at because it’s “dark” (although they did not include the Sexton in their list), and another said it was “sad”. One of the last students at the end of the session continued with complaints about lack of seats in the Killam around exam time, study rooms that are booked but there is no one in them, and lack of early morning hours. They appreciated the quiet study areas and the Shh service.

Killam – Students felt there was a good combination of individual and group study spaces, but suggested some chairs needed to be replaced in the First Floor Learning Commons, particularly the “blue, sled chairs”. They also commented on the noisiness of the LC and that many students were repurposing it into a social space. Regarding laptop thefts, students really liked the sign about the increase in thefts. They commented on other students leaving their belongings for long periods of time and how they have been asked to watch people’s stuff for them. When asked about laptop lockers or locks, neither appealed to them. Those in attendance said they would never leave their laptop unattended but they feel very safe on campus and very safe to bring their laptops to campus with them.

Sexton

As last year, students mentioned going elsewhere for study space. The Killam is their first choice, then the CHEB. Attendees liked the Killam, saying “the library is a dream here”, commenting on the amount of materials, the study spaces (particularly the Grad pad, study rooms, quiet spaces, food options and social space). They liked Night Owls, but cited problems with traveling home

late at night with the discontinuation of Tiger Patrol and lack of late buses. The Sexton Library is their last choice due to lack of quiet study space, study rooms, and food options.

Services

Studley

WMLC – Both the remaining students were unaware of the science librarian hours at the WMLC and also the Writing Centre hours and suggested a “where to get help” page online to advertise the services. When asked if they attended a library session in any of their classes, one said there may have been one in a first year class but paid little attention to it at the time.

Sexton

Students expressed some difficulties with printing – selecting colour printing from the library computers, and both colour and black & white printing from wireless. 1 student felt dissatisfied with book loan periods, particularly when needed for exams, and was unaware of renewal services. Instead they felt staff had little empathy their predicament. 1 was dissatisfied with the recall service, in that they would have to return their book within 10 days for the recaller. Aside from circulation services, 1 student felt there should be library orientation webinars before classes begin, and two students felt the library did not do enough outreach and communications about library services. 2 made suggestions of library talks or tours in the beginning of September. They recommended no leaflets or handouts, but online material instead so it can be accessed in the future.

Collections

There were very few comments about the collection, an indication that there is some form of satisfaction. When asked about document delivery, as previously noted, several students mentioned they either move on to items they can readily obtain or they are satisfied with what they have access to through Dal. At the Killam SIFT, attendees were asked if they have ever obtained a book from the stacks and all answered “no”. They also unanimously answered no, when asked if they have used the paging services. According to their answers, they tend to use only material they can find online.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General

Based on student responses, better liaison relationships with faculty and in-class sessions/introductions appear to help break the barrier between students and the library/librarians, raise awareness of RA and raise student comfort levels with contacting librarians for RA. Efforts in these areas should be improved to increase uptake of RA amongst reluctant student groups that stand to gain from this service.

Consider offering more library orientations and information sessions at the Sexton library as per the suggestions made in the Services section of this report.

Develop prompts or promotion of document delivery at typical times and point of need (e.g., mid-term, within search interfaces, etc.)

Continue looking into extending library/LC hours or consider only one location for extended/24-hour opening.

Reconsider the “problem” chairs in the Killam first floor LC (i.e., blue “sled” chairs).

Investigate printing issues at Sexton library (see section under Services).

Communications

Investigate how the Writing Centre and other student services promote their service.

Assessment

Request document delivery usage statistics for students for the past 3-5 years and monitor use going forward.

Assess usage of and satisfaction with study rooms and the booking system.

Conduct an assessment of the Sexton Library study spaces as well as student needs and behaviour regarding study spaces.

Continue with the Killam Space assessment, underscoring the feedback obtained through the SIFTS.

Review Night Owls usage statistics in light of the discontinuation of Tiger Patrol.

An "ethnograph-ish" study of students should be considered to observe student work behaviour when searching for and accessing materials (e.g., what do they do when the item is not available?, what do they do when they can't find material or have questions?) This study can potentially be limited to those student groups who don't appear to be aware of or use RA and document delivery, with comparisons to groups with considerable uptake of these services.

Future SIFTs

SIFT co-chairs and Library Heads met in September 2018 and decided to only conduct two SIFTs in 2018-19. Rather than being location-specific, these SIFTs will focus on the Indigenous student community (Halifax and Truro). The Chairs recommend returning to the location-specific SIFTs for 2019-20, with the expectation of structuring these sessions around the results of the 2019 Library Survey. An additional SIFT with a focus on Accessibility will also be planned for 2019-20.

Having an additional helping hand during SIFT sessions was very worthwhile, particularly for note-taking and assisting late-comers, and we would like to maintain having this help. The "assistant" will also be required to transcribe the audio-recording in order to improve the notes from the sessions.

Having the Head of the library or at least one librarian at the sessions has proven invaluable and is therefore a requirement going forward.

Because we permit students to leave when they wish, more important questions will be asked at the beginning of the sessions.

Since the findings for the Studley campus regarding awareness of RA were limited to only 2 students still in attendance at the WMLC and a fragmented discussion at the Killam session, it was hoped that the question, "did you know you can access research assistance..?" would be repeated in the 2018-19 SIFTs. Though we will be meeting with specific segments of the student community, this question should still be included.