Report of Findings of UTL Liaison Librarian Program Focus Groups

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for the

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[This document has been stripped of participant comments.]

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The faculty liaison program has been in place at the UTL, St. George campus since 2007. The faculty liaison librarian is expected to be the primary contact person for faculty in their designated subject area. One of the priorities outlined in the UTL strategic plan 2013-2018 *Charting our Future*, is a commitment to "serving the needs of researchers at all levels" (p. 2). With this priority in mind and discussions with librarians and the Head of Faculty & Student Engagement, the UTL is undertaking a self-evaluation of the faculty liaison librarian program. This report presents the findings of the first phase of that self-evaluation, focus group sessions with librarians and faculty.

Focus group sessions were conducted with librarians from the St. George, UTSC and UTM campuses and faculty from the St. George campus. Librarians and faculty were invited to participate in the focus group sessions via email where they were informed about the purpose of the focus groups and encouraged to sign up using an online system (librarians at St. George only) or by responding to the invitation email (librarians at UTSC/UTM and faculty at St. George). The focus group sessions were conducted by two experienced researchers, with one researcher responsible for moderating the sessions and the second researcher responsible for recording the session (i.e., live transcription). All focus group sessions were confidential and therefore no mention of or reference to individuals in a session is included in the transcriptions or this report.

This report has three main sections that summarize the findings from the focus group sessions for (1) librarians at St. George, (2) faculty at St. George, and (3) librarians at UTSC and UTM.

Summary of Findings: Librarians at St. George

A total of 77 librarians from the St. George campus participated in the focus group sessions. These participants were liaison librarians, functional specialists, service or department managers, and others who were interested in the liaison role. The discussion focused on: how librarians currently support and engage faculty; views about the faculty-liaison program; what activities should be stopped or changed; supporting faculty in their teaching and research in the future; skills needed to fulfil the role currently and in the future; how administration can support the role; and the structure/model/arrangement that may work best in the future.

Understanding the current environment

In describing their current liaison role, responsibilities, or experiences, participants touched upon many areas in which they engaged faculty or worked with each other to respond to faculty needs. *Outreach and support of faculty* occurred in a variety of ways: emails directly to faculty and/or through department chairs; invitations to faculty to view resources; announcements to keep faculty abreast of items of interest or new developments (e.g., access, copyright, UTL initiatives); attendance at faculty meetings or faculty events; organization of workshops, conferences or other events; development of online materials such as Libguides and tutorials;

and working with faculty as a partner on funded projects. Participants also respond to requests related to the collection, acquisitions, access, catalogue, using the library, copyright issues, compliance with grants and publishing, training of students and research assistants and other areas. Participants also mentioned that they may offer *support to students* in the form of instruction, seminars, workshops, research training, consultations, library tours, blackboard, and material requests. Participants indicated that they *worked with their colleagues to support faculty/students* such that some faculty requests are passed on to another colleague who is more knowledgeable and/or has the required experience or the liaison works in collaboration with their colleague(s) but the liaison remains the main point of contact with the faculty.

Views about faculty-liaison program

In discussing their views about the faculty-liaison program, participantsfocused on the different perspectives and interpretations of the program.

Definition, goals, objectives of faculty-liaison program. There is some confusion about the definition, goals or objectives of the program. Some participants did not understand what the term (i.e., liaison librarian) meant, others questioned whether the role was about establishing relationships, communicating, or supporting faculty in their teaching and research, and others expressed difficulty in distinguishing between liaison work and other duties.

Different models or approaches. Participants felt that the difference in approaches taken to fulfil the liaison role and the level of faculty engagement was dependent on whether or not librarians were embedded in the faculty/department and/or were responsible for collections. Participants also described a distributed or shared approach when supporting faculty, and others indicated that although they were not officially designated as a liaison librarian they performed liaison duties and wondered whether they too were not liaison librarians.

Assignment of liaison roles. Some participants felt there needed to be greater clarity in how liaison librarians were assigned to or paired with their subject area(s) and indicated that they were not always consulted prior to these assignments. Participants expressed that the mismatch between librarian subject expertise and assigned subject area(s) had in some instances impacted the faculty-librarian relationship as faculty expects the liaison librarian to be an expert in the field. There were conflicting views about whether liaison librarians needed to be a subject specialist with some indicating that subject expertise was important in order to do the role justice while others felt it was not necessary to be a subject specialist to serve the needs of faculty.

Jack of all trades. Participants felt that in the liaison librarian role there was pressure to be a jack of all trades as they were expected to be proficient in a number of areas, acquire multiple skills, and perform multiple activities.

Lots of work, time consuming, add-on and liaison is part of my job. Some participants felt that the liaison role was time-consuming with some requests taking longer than others or taking on a life of their own. Others felt that the liaison role was an add-on to and competing with their other

roles. While some participants agreed that time was an issue, they also viewed the liaison role as a part of their job.

Connection between collections/selectors and liaison role. Liaison librarians who were not involved in collection development felt somewhat disconnected from the program as they viewed the collections as one of the most important areas in which they are able to support faculty in their research and teaching.

Level of uptake, engagement, and need differ. The needs of the faculty at a given point in time, the subject area or discipline, the research focus, and the tradition of the department were seen as factors that impact the level of uptake and engagement between faculty and librarian.

Faculty don't know what the library can do for them. Participants felt that faculty were not aware of the services available to support their teaching and research and some were unaware they have a liaison librarian or that the program exists. They felt that the library needed to market itself better to faculty and that in order for librarians to be able to market library services the importance of the library-university relationship needs to be clearly articulated, librarians needed to be more informed of the services that are available across the library system to support faculty, and there needed to be a consistent message that can be communicated to faculty.

Establishing and maintaining relationships with faculty. Participants felt that for those librarians who were embedded in their department and/or there was buy in from the administration, it was easier to establish and maintain relationships with faculty. However, they felt that staffing changes and issues related to services the faculty need that are not addressed, presents challenges when trying to establish and maintain one-to-one relationships with faculty.

Re-thinking and re-imagining the faculty-liaison program

Participants were also asked to reflect on their liaison experiences and to think of and discuss the future of the liaison program. Seven themes emerged from this discussion.

Attending faculty meetings and informed about faculty needs. Participants felt that attending faculty meetings was an important factor in helping them to understand and assess faculty needs, communicate how they can support faculty, and build and maintain relationships with faculty.

Working with faculty as research partners. Participants felt that greater integration in faculty research, more collaboration with faculty on their research, and being viewed more as research partners rather than just providing a service to faculty were ways in which to begin or continue to engage faculty in the future.

Central hub for outreach and support from administration. An office designated for outreach and that is managed centrally was identified by participants as one of the ways to increase faculty engagement and buy in. Communication between the library administration and the administration with departments about how the library can support faculty in their teaching and

research will help in establishing an initial relationship with the department and set the stage for librarians to engage with faculty.

Communication and collaboration among librarians. Greater communication and collaboration among liaison librarians and their colleagues was identified as an important factor in making the role more efficient. Participants identified three ways to improve communication and collaboration: (1) an *organizational chart* to help them understand each other's roles making it easier to coordinate and collaborate with their colleagues or direct faculty appropriately when a request was beyond their expertise; (2) *tapping into and building on existing resources* to determine how the various functions can be coordinated more efficiently across librarians and between librarians and others in the university system; and (3) a *team approach* to provide support to each other, increase awareness of each other's responsibilities, and foster greater collaboration and connection among librarians.

Not one-size fits all model. Participants felt that a one-size fits all model was not practical given the varying levels of need and uses of information by each department and within disciplines, the number of services offered by the library, and the different approaches to the liaison role.

Hiring practices. Participants felt that as a part of the hiring process the liaison role should be clearly articulated in job postings or worked into the job profile. They also felt that librarians should be recognized for the investment they are making toward the liaison role and that some attention be paid to hiring specialists even though some acknowledged that that was not always possible.

Training. Participants felt that it was important to develop skills in digital tools, archives, data, copyright, and marketing in order to become more effective in their role and engage faculty.

Summary of Findings: Faculty at St. George

A total of 14 faculty representing a range of subject areas/disciplines participated in the focus group session - Classics, Earth Sciences, English, Forestry, French, Genomics, Occupational Therapy, Education, Pharmacy, Physics, Religion, and Sociology. The discussion with faculty focused on: how librarians currently support their teaching and research; their views on the role of librarians in supporting their teaching and research; and how they see librarians supporting their teaching and research in the future.

Faculty-librarian engagement

Faculty listed a number of ways in which they engage with librarians and these include faculty research, access to journals, Libguides, instruction, connecting faculty to others in the library system with required expertise, one-on-one consultations, workshops, finding and/or connecting to e-resources, and acquisitions.

Nature of relationship with liaison

Similar to the views expressed by librarians, faculty felt that is was easier to develop the faculty-librarian relationship when the librarian was embedded in the department. Some faculty indicated that while they were able to develop relationships with librarians it was not as systemic as they would like.

Finding librarian/library staff that best suit needs

The *Ask a librarian* feature or communication with their in-house librarian or liaison librarian were the two ways in which faculty were most likely to find the librarian or library staff that best suits their needs.

Systemic issues impacting faculty-librarian relationship/engagement

Faculty identified four factors they felt impacted the faculty-librarian relationship/engagement: (1) *valuing the library-faculty relationship* - faculty felt they were not consulted when decisions were made and felt this was important for them to understand the system. They also felt that because the library did not have a voice at the table within departments there was less of an opportunity for buy in; (2) *gaps in collection* - faculty expressed concern about the gaps in collection and saw it as an impediment to their teaching and research; (3) *issues with the catalogue* - faculty indicated that they found it difficult to find resources in the catalogue and to navigate and understand how the system searches; and (4) *data preservation and maintenance* - there was some concern among faculty about the level of support for the preservation and maintenance of data and the lack of expertise in this area.

Suggestions for addressing faculty needs

Faculty identified four ways, related to the systemic issues identified previously, in which the library can address their needs more efficiently: (1) *academic librarians* - faculty felt the library should invest in hiring academic librarians to address the issue of the gap in the collection; (2) *communication between faculty and library* - faculty identified several ways in which the library could communicate with faculty such as newsletters, emails, tailored discussions about issues that impact research (e.g., copyright, publishing), and focus groups that include both faculty and librarians; (3) *one-on-one contact with librarians* - faculty felt that having one-on-one contact with librarians would help librarians better understand the needs of the faculty; and (4) *tracking requests* - faculty recommended a system for tracking requests so that faculty can see the progress of their requests through the system.

Summary of Findings: Librarian at UTSC/UTM

A small number of librarians (4 each) from the UTSC and UTM campuses participated in focus groups. The discussion focused mainly on connections/collaborations between librarians from these two campuses and librarians at St. George and suggestions/advice on how best to engage

faculty in their teaching and research based on their experiences. Given the small number of participants, only a general summary of the findings across the two campuses is presented.

Participants indicated that where connections/collaborations occurred with librarians on the St. George campus it was mostly through leveraging the expertise of their colleagues downtown where faculty or students needed a resource or a service that was not available on their campus (e.g., data, gov docs). Other connections were related to the passing on of questions that came through the UTL question forum which are specific to their campus or questions or requests from faculty who are cross-appointed. Some librarians also indicated that some connections occur through informal working groups (e.g., Business librarians who meet at various times throughout the year to discuss things like purchasing, curriculum etc.).

Librarians at UTSC/UTM felt that the connection or collaboration with St. George could be improved or fostered by having a forum for sharing or getting advice from others across campuses but there needs to be formal recognition of the effort and time invested in such collaborations or connections. They also felt that more consultation around policy changes was needed especially since each campus has their own processes and protocols for implementing policies.

In offering advice and suggestions on how best to engage faculty based on their experiences in the liaison role, they felt that marketing and outreach, having buy in and support from the top (e.g., deans, department heads), receiving notifications when new faculty/sessions are hired, having a good rapport with faculty and delivering on what you say you will deliver, developing a management tool that allow librarians to track faculty interaction with the library, conducting focus groups with faculty to be informed of their needs, and thinking of liaisons as an academic unit were all key to faculty-librarian engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2007 the faculty liaison program has been in place at the UTL, St. George campus (see Appendix A for agreement on liaison expectations). According to the UTL website "liaison librarians may be consulted for a range of services offered by the library to support teaching and research" (Retrieved from http://resource.library.utoronto.ca/liaison/, June 19, 2014). The website further states that these services may include:

- research consultations for faculty

- curriculum related instruction

- course-customization of Blackboard "Library Resource" pages

- tailored research guides for courses or programs

- collection requests and suggestions

- questions or suggestions about library and information technology services

As the library's support to the research community rapidly evolves so does the role of the liaison librarian. Last year UTL released its strategic plan 2013-2018 *Charting our Future*, with a commitment to "serving the needs of researchers at all levels" (p. 2), through setting strategic priorities such as exceptional engagement and strategic stewardship. Given the priorities set out in the new strategic plan and discussions with librarians and the Head of Faculty & Student Engagement a process for rethinking and reimaging the faculty liaison program is being developed through a self-evaluation of the program.

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the first phase of this self-evaluation, focus group sessions conducted with librarians across the three University of Toronto campuses (St. George, Scarborough, and Mississauga) and with faculty from the St. George campus.

METHOD

Focus groups were chosen as the method of data collection as it allows participants to interact and discuss how they feel about a specific topic, "yielding a collective rather than an individual view" (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2011, p.436). While focus groups can have many purposes some of the main ones are to generate impressions of programs or services and stimulate new ideas (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

Participants

Focus groups were conducted with librarians across the UTL system and faculty on the St. George campus. A mass email was sent out on April 21, 2014 (see Appendix B) to all librarians across the three campuses informing them about the *Re-Imagining Liaison: Liaison Program Self-Study 2014* and indicating that a subsequent email will be sent in a few days inviting them to be a part of the process through participation in the first phase of the evaluation, facilitated focus groups with all librarians. Librarians were encouraged to sign up for the focus groups in order to reflect on their experiences with the liaison program and share with colleagues their impressions of the current program and ideas for future librarian-faculty engagement.

Librarians on the St. George campus were invited by the Head of Faculty & Student Engagement to sign up through an online system for one of 7 focus group sessions (see Appendix C). One focus group each with librarians on the Scarborough and Mississauga campuses was scheduled through their respective chiefs. On May 15, 2014 an email (see Appendix D) was sent out to all faculty on the St. George campus to participate in a focus group session to share their thoughts about how they engage with librarians currently and hope to engage with librarians in the future.

A total of 10 focus groups were conducted over the period May 9, 2014 - June 5, 2014. Seventy-seven librarians from the St. George campus (across 7 focus groups), 4 each from the Scarborough and Mississauga campuses, and 14 faculty from the St. George campus participated in the focus group sessions.

Development of Focus Group Protocols

The focus group questions were developed in consultation with the Head of Faculty & Student Engagement with the three groups in mind: librarians from the St. George campus; librarians from the Scarborough and Mississauga campuses; and faculty from the St. George campus.

St. George participants: These questions were designed to gather information about how librarians currently support and engage faculty in their respective roles (e.g., liaison, functional); how participants view the program; what should be stopped or changed; how they see the program supporting faculty in their teaching and research in the future; what skills they think they need to fulfill the role currently and in the future; how administration can support the role;

and what structure/model/arrangement they think would work best in the future. (see Appendix E)

Scarborough and Mississauga participants: These questions were designed to gather information about how librarians at these campuses currently support and engage faculty in their respective roles; understand if and how they collaborate or connect with librarians on the St. George campus to support faculty in their teaching and research; understand what works well or does not work well when collaboration takes place; identify other ways that might be useful/helpful to work with librarians from the St. George campus to support faculty; and suggest how best to engage faculty in their teaching and research based on their own experiences. (see Appendix F)

Faculty participants: These questions were designed to gather information about how faculty currently work with librarians to support their teaching and research; how they find the librarian that best supports their needs; their current views of the role of librarians in supporting their teaching and research; and how they see librarians supporting their teaching and research in the future. (see Appendix G)

For all focus groups, additional questions were asked during the session where the moderator felt it was necessary to clarify or gain a deeper understanding of a participant's response.

Administration of Focus Groups

Two researchers, a moderator and recorder were in the room. The role of the moderator was to lead the session and keep participants focused on the topic for discussion. The role of the recorder was to take notes from the conversations as they occur in the room. Each session was also digitally recorded for quality assurance (i.e., verification and reliability) purposes. Digital recording was only done after there was consensus by all participants in the room. Participants were informed that the focus groups were confidential and therefore participants were asked to introduce themselves by name prior to the live or audio recording and encouraged not to mention the names of participants in the room. Focus group sessions were no more than 2 hours.

Data Analysis

Focus group notes were analyzed separately for each of the three groups (St. George, Scarborough and Mississauga, and faculty) in NVivo 10. The focus group notes were reviewed and analysed by both researchers and themes extracted. These extracted themes were used to organize the findings into broader categories that are used to present the summary of findings that follow.

RESULTS

This section will present a summary of the findings from focus groups conducted with librarians at the St. George campus, followed by faculty at the St. George campus, and ending with librarians from the Scarborough and Mississauga campuses.

Summary of Findings: Librarians at St. George

As previously mentioned a total of 77 librarians from the St. George campus participated in the focus groups. They were liaison librarians, functional specialists, service or department managers, and others who were interested in the liaison role.

Understanding the current environment

Description of liaison roles, responsibilities, or experiences

Participants were asked to describe their current liaison role, responsibilities or experiences. These descriptions touched upon many areas in which participants engaged faculty or worked with each other to respond to faculty needs.

Faculty outreach/support. Initial emails directly to faculty and/or through department chairs letting them know who their liaison is and that there is support for their teaching and research was one of the methods of communication between librarians and faculty. In addition to these initial emails some librarians invite faculty to the library to look at resources, and send out announcements to keep them up to date about items of interest or new developments (e.g., access, copyright, UTL initiatives). Some librarians attend or are included in faculty meetings and are able to develop relationships with the faculty. Others engage faculty through organizing conferences, workshops and other events, attending faculty events, aligning events with the library, working with faculty as a partner on funded projects, and through the development of various online materials such as Libguides and tutorials.

In liaising with faculty, librarians respond to requests from faculty related to collection development, acquisitions, access, navigating the catalogue, and how to use the library. Faculty also request information on copyright issues, assistance in compliance with grants and publishing, training graduate students and research assistants, and consultations in other areas.

Supporting students. Students may be supported in a number of ways: instruction (for some faculties this is embedded in their program or is done at the request of faculty), seminars, workshops, research training, consultations, library tours, blackboard use and related issues, and material requests.

Working with colleagues to support faculty/students. Librarians expressed that they sometimes depended on their colleagues to address faculty needs. Some faculty requests are

passed on to another colleague in the library system that is more knowledgeable or has the required expertise in the requested area (e.g., purchasing, instruction, copyright, data). Some requests are dealt with by the liaison in collaboration with other colleagues so that the liaison remains the main point of contact.

Views about faculty-liaison program

Participants were asked to discuss their views about the current faculty liaison program. This section is divided into ten sub-subsections that describe the different perspectives and interpretations of the program.

Definition, goals, objectives of faculty-liaison program

Some librarians were confused about the definition, goals or objectives of the program, is it about establishing relationships, communication, instruction for students, supporting faculty?

Different models or approaches

Participants commented on the different approaches taken to fulfil the role of liaison librarian and that the approach and level of faculty engagement depended on whether or not they were embedded in the libraries and were responsible for collections.

Some participants described a distributed or shared approach among colleagues to support faculty.

Some participants expressed that although they are not official liaison librarians that they also perform liaison activities or duties, some even questioned whether or not they were in fact liaisons.

Assignment of liaison roles

Some participants felt that how some liaison librarians were assigned to or paired with their subject area(s) is not clear and felt that the subject area(s) was imposed upon them. This mismatch between librarian subject expertise and assigned subject area(s) has in some instances made the faculty-librarian relationship uncomfortable as the faculty expects them to be experts in their field.

While some participants felt that not being an expert in a subject area(s) did not do the role of liaison librarian justice others felt that it was not always necessary to be a subject specialist in order to serve the needs of faculty.

Jack of all trades

Participants expressed that they felt there was pressure to be proficient in a number of areas, acquire multiple skills, and perform multiple activities in their liaison role which is difficult given their other roles.

Lots of work, time consuming, add-on

Some participants also commented on the amount of work and time it took to fulfil some of their liaison responsibilities with some requests taking longer than others or taking on a life of its own depending on the specific nature of the request(s). Some felt it was an add-on to and competing with their other roles.

Liaison is part of my job

While others agreed that time was an issue they felt that their liaison responsibilities were a part of their job.

Connection between collections/selectors and liaison role

Some participants felt that their job as liaison is made easier if they are the selector in the area or involved in collection development. They view the collections as one of the areas that are most important to faculty research and teaching. Those who are not involved in collections expressed they felt somewhat disconnected.

Level of uptake, engagement, and need differ

Participants felt that the level of uptake and engagement is dependent on several factors: the needs of the faculty at a given point in time (e.g., seeking tenure), the subject area, research focus, or tradition of the department.

Faculty don't know what the library can do for them

Participants felt that faculty was unaware of how the library can support them in their teaching and research, faculty were unaware they have a liaison librarian or there was a program, and that the library needed to do a better job of marketing itself to faculty.

Some participants questioned how they could market services better to faculty when the importance of the library to the university is not clearly articulated, it is not clear to librarians what services are available across the library system to support faculty, and there is not a consistent message.

Establishing and maintaining relationships with faculty

Participants felt that maintaining relationships with faculty is easier if the librarian was embedded and there was buy in from the administration. However, participants felt that maintaining one-to-one relationships with faculty is challenging especially when there is staffing changes (e.g., faculty or librarian turn over) which leads to librarians having to establish new relationships and understandings with faculty.

Some participants also felt that the relationship between faculty and the library is difficult to establish and maintain when issues with the services they need are not being addressed.

Re-thinking and re-imagining the faculty-liaison program

This section summarizes the discussion among participants when asked to reflect on their liaison role or experiences and to think about the future of the liaison program. The summary of these discussions is divided into seven sub-sections presented below.

Attending faculty meetings and informed about faculty needs

Participants felt that being included in faculty meetings was one of the ways that they could find out about the needs of the faculty, communicate how they can support them, and build and sustain faculty-librarian relationships.

Working with faculty as research partners

Participants also felt that highlighting librarians as research partners, being more integrated in faculty research, and collaborating with faculty on research were ways to begin or continue to engage faculty in the future.

Central hub for outreach and support from administration

Participants felt that having a designated office for outreach and that is managed centrally would help to increase faculty engagement and buy in. Library administration communicating with administration within departments etc. about how the library can support teaching and research is important as it helps to establish an initial relationship between the department and the library that may make it easier for them to engage.

Communication and collaboration among librarians

Participants felt that there was a need for greater communication and collaboration among liaison librarians and their colleagues in order for them to liaise more efficiently. Several ways in which communication and collaboration could be improved or facilitated were offered: organizational chart, tapping into and building on existing resources and developing new ones, and considering and implementing a team approach.

Organizational chart. Participants felt that an organizational chart would be helpful in understanding the various roles in the library system and also make it easier to coordinate and collaborate with their colleagues or direct faculty appropriately when a request is beyond their expertise.

Tapping into and building on existing resources. Participants felt that in order to foster better communication and collaboration then the library should examine existing resources to see how functions can be coordinated more efficiently across librarians and between librarians and others in the university system.

Team approach. Participants felt that a team approach would work well and help to provide support to other librarians working in larger departments, increase awareness of what others are doing, and in general foster greater collaboration and connections among librarians.

Not one-size fits all model

Participants felt that given the varying levels of need and uses of information by each department and within disciplines, the number of services offered by the library, and the different approaches to the liaison role, no one model can serve the needs of the faculty.

Hiring practices

Participants felt that the role of the liaison should be articulated in job postings or worked into the job profile and that there is recognition of the investment librarians are making toward the liaison role. Participants also felt that some attention should be paid to hiring specialists, however, there was acknowledgement that it was not always possible or suitable to staff at that level as the needs/structure of departments vary.

Training

Participants felt that in order to become more effective in their role they needed to develop skills in and understanding of digital tools, archives, data, copyright, and marketing to engage faculty.

Summary of Findings: Faculty at St. George

Fourteen faculty representing a range of subject areas/disciplines participated in the focus group session – Classics, Earth Sciences, English, Forestry, French, Genomics, Occupational Therapy, Education, Pharmacy, Physics, Religion, and Sociology.

As mentioned previously the discussion with faculty focused on how librarians currently support their teaching and research; their views on the role of librarians in supporting their teaching and research; and how they see librarians supporting their teaching and research in the future. These are discussed in the eleven sub-sections that follow.

Faculty-librarian engagement

Faculty listed a number of ways in which they engage with librarians – these were similar to those identified by librarians previously: research, access to journals, Libguides, instruction, connecting to others in the library system with required expertise, one-on-one consultations, workshops, finding/connecting to e-resources, and acquisitions.

Nature of relationship with liaison

Faculty shared a similar view expressed by librarians previously that it was easier to develop a relationship with the liaison librarian when that person was embedded in the department. Others felt that while they were able to develop personal relationships with librarians it was not as systemic as they would like.

Finding librarian/library staff that best suit needs

Faculty used the Ask a librarian feature or communicated with their in-house librarian or liaison librarian to find the librarian or library staff that best suits their needs.

Systemic issues impacting faculty-librarian relationship/engagement

Faculty identified and discussed some of the issues they felt was impacting the faculty-librarian relationship/engagement. These were related to valuing the library-faculty relationship, gaps in the collection, issues with the catalogue, and data preservation and maintenance.

Valuing the library-faculty relationship. Faculty felt that their opinion was not sought when decisions were made and felt that this was important to their understanding of the system. They also felt that the library did not have a voice at the table with departments and therefore there is no opportunity for buy in.

Gaps in collection. Faculty were concerned about the gaps in the collection/acquisitions and see this as an impediment to their teaching and research.

Issues with catalogue. Faculty expressed difficulty in finding resources in the catalogue and found it hard to navigate and understand how the system searches.

Data preservation and maintenance. Faculty expressed concern about the support for the preservation and maintenance of data and lack of expertise in this area.

Suggestions for addressing faculty needs

Faculty were asked to discuss ways in which the library can address their needs more efficiently. Their suggestions were related to the systemic issues identified in the previous section.

Academic librarians. Faculty felt that in order to address the issue of collections/acquisitions that there should be an investment in hiring academic librarians.

Communication between faculty and library. Faculty suggested various ways the library could communicate with faculty such as newsletters, emails, tailored discussions about issues that impact their research (e.g., copyright, publishing), focus groups that include both faculty and librarians.

One-on-one contact with librarians. Faculty felt that one-on-one contact with librarians would be beneficial in helping librarians understand the needs of the faculty they are serving.

Tracking requests. A system for tracking requests was also proposed so that faculty can see the progress through the system.

Summary of Findings: Librarians at UTSC/UTM

As mentioned previously, the number of participants from the UTSC and UTM campuses were quite small (4 each) and therefore the findings from these focus groups will be presented as one general summary across these two sources and will focus only on connections/collaborations between librarians from these two campuses and librarians at St. George, and suggestions/advice on how best to engage faculty in their teaching and research.

When asked to describe collaboration or connection with librarians at St. George, participants explained that connections to St. George, where it occurred, was mostly through leveraging the expertise of some of their colleagues downtown where faculty or students might need a resource or service not available on their respective campuses (e.g. data librarian, gov docs). They may either refer the faculty/student or contact the librarian with the required expertise. Other connections described relate to questions that may come through the UTL question forum which are specific to their campuses and gets passed on to them or faculty who are cross-appointed may also be in contact. There is also a connection through an informal working group with Business librarians who meet 4-5 times a year to discuss things like purchasing, curriculum etc.

When asked how collaboration or connection might be improved or fostered, participants felt that having a forum for sharing and getting advice from others across campuses might be helpful but the effort and time invested in these collaborations or connections should be formally recognized. Participants also expressed that there needed to be more consultation around policy changes.

Participants were asked to offer any advice or suggestions on how best to engage faculty based on their experiences in the liaison role. They felt that marketing and outreach, having buy in and support from the top (e.g., deans, department heads), being notified when new faculty/sessionals are hired, having a good rapport and delivering on what you say you will deliver, developing a management tool that allow librarians to track faculty interaction with the library, conducting focus groups with faculty to find out what they need, and thinking of liaisons as an academic unit are all key to faculty-librarian engagement.

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APPENDIX A: FACULTY LIAISON LIBRARIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities of Faculty Liaison Librarians

In general terms, the Faculty Liaison Librarian is the primary contact person for faculty in their designated subject area. Faculty is understood to include all academic hires, including lecturers, research associates etc. The Faculty Liaison Librarian will be listed as the primary contact person on the web and in publications such as the Faculty Resource Guide.

It is important to clarify that although there is a primary contact person for each subject area, all librarians will continue to provide public service in all subject areas taking the opportunity to teach or provide reference service etc. in any subject they choose, and referring only if appropriate.

Responsibilities:

1. As contact person for a subject area, the Faculty Liaison Librarian will **respond to faculty requests.** Questions may be referred to staff on the Contact List, with appropriate follow-up to ensure that the faculty member received the help that was needed.

2. Liaisons will regularly contact key faculty members and departmental staff: Chairs of Departments or Directors of Programs, Centers etc., as well as with Directors of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs and others.

3. The Faculty Liaison Librarian will make contact with **new faculty** within weeks of being identified as the contact person in the Chief Librarian's welcoming letter, offering assistance and letting the faculty member know they are available when help is needed.

4. The Faculty Liaison Librarian will be active in **other outreach activities.** Each individual will select what they feel is most appropriate and manageable in their own situation. In other words it is expected that individual Faculty Liaison Librarians will be **proactive** in different ways.

5. Faculty Liaison Librarians will meet regularly to:
   * explore options for proactive outreach – discussing why as well as what to do
   * find solutions to practical how to questions e.g. "What do I say when I phone the new faculty member?".

Revised July 2007

APPENDIX B: MASS EMAIL TO ALL LIBRARIANS

Hello colleagues:

The UTL faculty liaison program has been in place for several years now, and many of you have done some wonderful work making strong connections with our faculty. To build on our success , and to align the program with our new Strategic Plan, **I'm writing to you today with information and a tentative timetable to take a fresh look the U of T Libraries' faculty liaison program.**

I've met with many of you already during departmental meetings to get input on the how to develop a process to reimagine faculty liaison in order to advance the Library's Strategic Plan and the University's strategic directions. I want to thank you for your contributions to those discussions. Many of your ideas have been incorporated into the process outlined below. This Spring, there will be an opportunity for all librarians to re-think and re-imagine our liaison work in the next five years and beyond. To ensure a process that is both transparent and effective, I've looked to the well-established UTQAP review process (see section 5.5, in particular) as inspiration and guidance, and I am proposing the following:

1. **Self-Study activities:** Facilitated librarian focus groups with analysis and report; facilitated focus groups with faculty about liaison work; identifying, gathering and reviewing of collected data that can help us understand both our reach and gaps (Spring-Summer 2014)
2. An **external review** of the faculty liaison program (Fall 2014)
3. **Administrative evaluation** of the self-study components and the external assessment report resulting in **recommendations** for program quality improvement (Winter 2015)
4. Preparation and **adoption of plans to implement the recommendations** and to monitor their implementation (Winter 2015)
5. **Follow-up reporting on the principal findings of the review and the implementation** of the recommendations (Spring 2015)

My intention is for reporting and follow-up discussion to take place at every milestone in the plan, and to share reports and data widely throughout the process.

In the next few days, all librarians (both liaison and those in functional roles) will receive an invitation to attend one of several facilitated focus groups. These focus groups will provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your own liaison work to date; share with colleagues from across the UTL how you see the future of librarian-faculty engagement; and collectively imagine how you will work alongside faculty in the future. Focus groups will be scheduled for librarians at UTM and UTSC as well. There are enough spots in the focus groups to accommodate all librarians. I hope that you will participate in the focus groups; your input will be important and your voice is critical to enhancing the liaison program.

Rita Vine | Head, Faculty & Student Engagement | 416-946-4041 | www.library.utoronto.ca

APPENDIX C: EMAIL TO REGISTER FOR FOCUS GROUPS

Hello everyone,

Reimagining Liaison: Sign up for focus groups - St. George Campus librarians

As part of the assessment of the U of T Libraries' liaison program, you are invited to participate in a focus group. This is the first step in the self-study component of the assessment process, and all librarians are invited to participate -- both liaison librarians *and* those without liaison assignments.

Focus groups begin May 9 and run through the end of the month. There are 7 groups scheduled for St. George librarians, and you may register for any one of them.

Link to the registration page:

http://resource.library.utoronto.ca/course_registration/course.cfm?affiliation=staffdev&course_id=1605

UTM and UTSC librarians focus groups will be scheduled separately at their respective campuses.

Thank you for your participation in this important initiative.

Rita Vine | Head, Faculty & Student Engagement | 416-946-4041 | www.library.utoronto.ca

APPENDIX D: EMAIL TO FACULTY

A message to faculty members at the University of Toronto, St. George campus:

Starting in Spring 2014, the U of T Library will conduct a review of its faculty liaison librarian program, a planned next step to support the goals of the Library's [Strategic Plan](#).

The <u>faculty liaison librarian</u> is the designated contact person between the Library and academic units on the St. George campus.

As part of the review process, we are **seeking currently appointed faculty members from across all disciplines to participate in a confidential focus group on June 5 2014,** from 11:45 a.m. - 2:00 p.m in the Robarts Library. A light lunch will be provided.

Other than interest, there are no additional requirements to participate. Both regular and infrequent library users are needed, representing different disciplines and different Library use levels. You will be asked for your thoughts on how you engage with liaison librarians now, and how you see your needs changing in the future. The focus group will be conducted by an outside facilitator and individual contributions from focus group members will be confidential.

Space is limited. **If you are interested in participating, please contact Rita Vine, Head of Faculty & Student Engagement, U of T Libraries, rita.vine@utoronto.ca, 416-946-4041**

APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL- ST GEORGE

Introduction by facilitators - (purpose of FGs):
Research over the years has pointed to the fact that the liaison role is rapidly evolving, leading research libraries to re-imagine the scope of this role. At the end of April you received correspondence regarding the liaison program self-study 2014. The purpose of the self-study is to evaluate the liaison program, to build on its current success and to align the program with the strategic plan 2013-2018. Given the commitment set out in this new strategic plan to respond to the changing needs of the research community it is important that we hear from you and have an understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing the library over the next five years.

Your input is valuable to this exercise! This is your opportunity to tell us about and reflect upon your experiences with the liaison program to date, discuss with colleagues the future of librarian-faculty engagement at U of T and how you will work with faculty in the future.

Instructions about session:
Today there are two of us (researchers) in the room. My responsibility will be to facilitate the discussion and Pamela will be live recording your responses. As you can appreciate Pamela may not be able to capture all of your thoughts and so we are asking if we can also digitally record this session for quality assurance purposes. We will not at any point ask you to identify yourself by name. If at any time you would like to discuss something that you do not feel comfortable being recorded please let us know and we will stop recording. All recordings, live and digital, are used only by the researchers to develop an overall summary of your responses and will not be shared with UTL.

Participants introduce themselves

Understanding the current environment
Our general understanding of the responsibility of the liaison librarian is that they are "the primary contact person for faculty in their designated area" and as such they respond to requests from faculty, regularly contact key faculty members and departmental staff, make contact with new faculty and are active in outreach activities.

- We do understand that the responsibilities listed here are quite broad and may not be reflective of all that you do; to provide us with a greater understanding of your current liaison role can you describe your current role? (**Probe:** How do you currently support faculty in your role? How much time would you say is devoted to this role? How closely do you work with faculty?) (**Additional Probe:** For those of you who support students as well as faculty, tell us about what you do?)

Re-imagining the liaison program
The next set of questions asks you to reflect on your liaison role and to think about the future of the liaison program:

- How do you see the liaison program best supporting faculty in their teaching and research mission in the future? (**Probe:** What should be stopped/changed? What should be implemented (e.g., new strategies to promote engagement)?
- What skills do you think you need to fulfill this role? (**Probe:** short-term and long-term)
- What can the administration (i.e., Head of Faculty & Student Engagement) do to better support your role in the program?
- Imagine you were given the opportunity to develop (or conceptualize) a liaison program, what would that program look like? (**Probe:** What structure do you think would work best?)

APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL- UTSC/UTM

Introduction by facilitators - (purpose of FGs):

{this will include a reminder of the purpose of the FGs – that is, present the bigger picture and then explain to participants that we are interested in understanding more about their connections with and collaboration with librarians on the St. George campus and based on their experiences would like to hear any suggestions/advice on how best to engage faculty}

Instructions about session:
Today there are two of us (researchers) in the room. My responsibility will be to facilitate the discussion and Pamela will be live recording your responses. As you can appreciate Pamela may not be able to capture all of your thoughts and so we are asking if we can also digitally record this session for quality assurance purposes. We will not at any point ask you to identify yourself by name. If at any time you would like to discuss something that you do not feel comfortable being recorded please let us know and we will stop recording. All recordings, live and digital, are used only by the researchers to develop an overall summary of your responses and will not be shared with UTL.

Participants introduce themselves

Understanding their liaison environment

Please describe your current liaison role or your experiences or connection with that role?

(**Probe:** How do you currently support faculty in your role? (**Additional Probe:** Do you also engage students? Please tell us about this.)

The next set of questions asks specifically about your connection to or collaboration with librarians on the St. George campus:

- Do you collaborate or connect with other librarians on the St. George campus (to support faculty in their teaching and research)? Please describe this collaboration or connection.
- What works well or does not work well when collaborating or connecting with librarians on the St. George campus? (**Probe if needed:** How might this collaboration/connection work better or be improved?) (**Another probe if needed:** In what other ways do you think it might be useful/helpful to work with librarians from the St. George campus to support faculty in their teaching and research?)

Suggestions/advice on engaging faculty
- Based on your experiences with the liaison program here at (UTSC/UTM) what advice or suggestions do you have on how best to engage faculty in their teaching and research? (**Probe if needed:** What has worked well for you? What has not worked well for you?)

APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL- FACULTY

Introduction by facilitators - (purpose of FGs):
Research over the years has pointed to the fact that the liaison role is rapidly evolving, leading research libraries to re-imagine the scope of this role. The purpose of the self-study is to evaluate the faculty-liaison program, to build on its current success and to align the program with the strategic plan 2013-2018. Given the commitment set out in the new strategic plan to respond to the changing needs of the research community it is important that we hear from you and have an understanding of how the library can meet the needs of faculty over the next five years.

Your input is valuable to this exercise! This is your opportunity to tell us about and reflect upon your experiences with librarians and discuss with colleagues the future of librarian-faculty engagement at U of T.

Instructions about session:
Today there are two of us (researchers) in the room. My responsibility will be to facilitate the discussion and Pamela will be live recording your responses. As you can appreciate Pamela may not be able to capture all of your thoughts and so we are asking if we can also digitally record this session for quality assurance purposes. We will not at any point ask you to identify yourself by name. If at any time you would like to discuss something that you do not feel comfortable being recorded please let us know and we will stop recording. All recordings, live and digital, are used only by the researchers to develop an overall summary of your responses and will not be shared with UTL.

Participants introduce themselves {includes name and faculty/department/program}

Understanding how faculty engage with librarians

- Please describe how you currently work with librarians to support your teaching and research?
  - How do you find the librarian that best suits your needs?
  - How do librarians support your courses –small and large classes/when there is no research assignment?
  - How do librarians support your research? (e.g., Collaboration with grant applications? Sourcing research materials?)
- How do you view the role of librarians in supporting your teaching and research?

Looking to the future
- Thinking about your research life over the next five years, how can librarians support you in your research? (**Probe:** What do you wish librarians can /could do to support your research?)