

[email June 3 2015]

TO: UTLIBRARIANS@LIST.LIBRARY.UTORONTO.CA

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to enclose the final report of the external review of the library liaison program. This report is the result of two days of meetings held in mid-April with the reviewers, Deb Wallace (Harvard) and Lisa Norberg (Barnard, K|N Consulting). I encourage you to read the report as the reviewers are recommending a number of changes to the way we engage with our faculty community, including some significant modifications of the liaison model at U of T.

Your involvement in the evolution of our faculty engagement model and processes will be important during this time. There will be a number of scheduled feedback opportunities to discuss and review the report, and to gather input from individuals as well, as we look for the best ways to implement its recommendations. I encourage you to undertake conversations in your departments and with colleagues too.

I have asked Rita and Julie to work with you to hear your feedback and to develop an action plan in order to move forward in this important area.

We look forward to your comments, questions, and ideas.

With best regards,
Larry

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Report on External Review: University of Toronto Libraries Liaison Librarian Program

Submitted to:

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May 15, 2015

Table of Contents

The Review Approach 3
General Observations and Key Recommendation 3
Responses to Terms of Reference 4
Opportunities..... 10
Appendix A: Terms of Reference 12
Appendix B: Site Interview Schedule 13
Appendix C: External Review Panel Bios..... 14

The Review Approach

As external reviewers, we were invited by Larry Alford, Chief Librarian, University of Toronto Libraries (UTL), to provide comments, observations and recommendations as per the Terms of Reference found in Appendix A.

Prior to the site visit, Rita Vine, Head, Faculty and Student Engagement, provided us with a comprehensive overview of the current faculty liaison program; Report of Findings of UTL Liaison Librarian Program Focus Groups (Hebert – July 27, 2014); and other materials related to the UTL and University of Toronto (UT) context.

We completed a two-day site visit on April 15-16, 2015 where we met with a total of 54 people within focus groups ranging in size from three – eight participants. Thirty-five of the participants were either faculty leaders in administrative roles (e.g., Vice-Provost, Dean, Director, Chair) or senior administrators/program directors. The remaining participants were UTL librarians, most in senior administrative or leadership roles representing a wide range of libraries and programs in the tri-campus system.

We followed a semi-structured interview protocol, asking the participants to reflect on their engagement with UTL based on services received via the Faculty Liaison Program or other channels and then comment on what they thought was working well, opportunities for improvement, and what might be expanded, contracted, or discontinued. We also solicited opinions on where UTL should focus resources in support of faculty research, teaching, learning and administrative responsibilities given the constant changes in the higher education and information landscapes. We assured participants of our commitment to confidentiality, explaining that their contributions would be aggregated, not attributed to any individual. We also noted that our report would be delivered to the Chief Librarian, who would provide follow-up as appropriate to the focus group participants.

General Observations and Key Recommendation

Clearly, UTL is operating from a position of strength, not only in its collections, expertise, systems, and facilities, but more importantly, with a highly-satisfied faculty user community (i.e., faculty in research and teaching roles through faculty leaders in senior administrative roles). Faculty participants enthusiastically, often passionately, described the incredible asset UTL is to their teaching, research, and administrative or community work. Based on the faculty's high satisfaction with their engagement with librarians, we recommend that you build on the successes of the existing program, but reposition it from a general-purpose "support" program (i.e., liaison program) to a strategically-positioned, solution-based program centered on research and teaching innovation.

By aligning the program with faculty's key "pain points" (e.g., open access, data management, digital scholarship, online learning, copyright/intellectual property, academic integrity), you

have the opportunity to not only strengthen existing relationships, but expand your faculty user-base, creating value at new levels with impact on a wider scale. With program objectives that are focused and measurable/evidence-based plus service-delivery approaches that are proactive and personalized, you can leverage UTL's extensive resources in high-impact areas, including:

- President Gertler's three priorities
- New models of research and teaching driven by changes in higher education and digital scholarship
- Advancing the field of academic librarianship.

We recognize that repositioning the liaison program has broader implications for the entire library organization – both structurally and culturally. As a first step, consider establishing an exploratory team to propose a service approach for one strategic area. (See O'Reilly, Charles A., III, and Michael Tushman. "[Organizational Ambidexterity: Past, Present and Future.](#)" *Academy of Management Perspectives* 27, no. 4 (November 2013): 324–338.) The pilot can identify the capabilities (organizational and individual) needed to expand the scope, leading to other innovative services that would support an evolutionary change to the faculty engagement model.

In the following section, we provide points to consider that could help you achieve an even greater collaborative partnership with faculty – an aspiration that drives the current Faculty Liaison Program and is consistent with UTL's position as an innovative, world-class institution.

Responses to Terms of Reference

As per the Terms of Reference (see Appendix A), we have outlined our observations and recommendations in six areas. However, given that we recommend you overhaul the current program, not simply undertake incremental improvements, we have taken several of the terms in different directions than we believe were intended when they were first drafted.

1. Roles and Responsibilities of Library Liaisons; Alignment to UTL and UT

The document describing the *Responsibilities of Faculty Liaison Librarians*, for the St. George campus, last revised in July 2007, remains a source of considerable confusion and frustration among the staff members it is designed to guide. It fails to provide the explicit goal(s) of the program, how the program is structured or organized, and who is ultimately responsible or accountable for what – especially when responsibilities cross disciplines, functional lines, libraries, or campuses. The document emphasizes the liaisons' role as a contact and urges specific types of communication and outreach, but it does not define the range of activities the liaison is expected to perform. Even within traditional subject disciplines, the list of liaison responsibilities does not specify if or how the liaison should handle collection, research, or instruction-related requests. It is not clear from this document what services liaisons are expected to provide or what services faculty can expect

to receive.

While we heard a great deal of praise for individual librarians, faculty and administrators expressed frustration with a range of issues they believe UTL could help with, most of which fall outside traditional disciplinary divisions, such as open access, copyright, and data management. UTL has a talented group of staff members attentive to these areas, yet they are not represented in the liaison program and are reaching capacity on their ability to meet growing demands. The document and the program it reflects focus on discipline-based programs without regard for new and evolving forms of interdisciplinary research and teaching.

Moreover, the current document does not address how the faculty liaison program supports the priorities outlined in UTL's strategic plan *Charting Our Future* despite clear connections. There is, for instance, a natural link between the liaison program and the goal for "Exceptional Engagement – 1. We will engage deeply with the higher education community on issues that impact their scholarship." Similarly, there is no reference to how the liaison program is aligned with or supports the President's Three Priorities. Over the course of our discussions, academic leaders raised a number of potential opportunities where UTL could have an impact on the stated priorities (see Opportunities). Identifying and including these elements in a document of this type would provide much needed clarity and direction.

Next Steps:

Given we are recommending a repositioning of the liaison program, we do not believe a revision of the current document would be a good use of time. Instead, we encourage UTL to work together to draft a new document, or even series of documents depending on the model, that formalizes a multi-faceted approach to the provision of library services to faculty. The document should have clearly defined goals and outline how each approach advances the UTL's Strategic Plan and/or UT's Three Priorities.

The document should be accompanied by a service level standards agreement (see section 4) that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the organization, as well as the individual and sets levels of expectations for both the librarian and the faculty member. In addition to the front-line staff, the document should include the roles and responsibilities of the supervisors, mid- and upper-level managers and administrators, whose cooperation, communication, and accountability for the multi-pronged program will be key to its success.

2. Structural and Administrative Model

Despite widespread adoption across many academic libraries, liaison programs at most large research institutions are facing many of the same challenges that UTL's program grapples with. As the portfolios for liaisons expand, it is clear that no one liaison can do it

all. Domain specialists are increasingly reliant on functional experts to provide expertise or technical support to meet new and ever expanding demands. These issues often result in gaps or inconsistencies in service, as well as internal battles over turf.

Given the complexity of the UTL system, it would not be practical or possible to recommend a single overarching program or solution. Instead we recommend a three-pronged approach to providing the kind of engaged and responsive service UTL aspires to and often delivers.

Next Steps:

Where it isn't broke – don't fix it. There are pockets of success across the system where the liaison program is working and working well. Many of the librarians have developed meaningful and effective relationships with their programs and their faculty and those should be continued and enhanced. Where the term "liaison" is recognized by faculty and administrators and has meaning it should be leveraged and promoted. For those in a supervisory or leadership position over liaisons, emphasis should be placed on building a culture of service that extends outward across the system through effective partnerships and collaboration. While these liaison programs may run their natural course and eventually evolve into a new model, for now they offer areas of excellence that should be supported and celebrated.

Where it is broke – let it go. There are clearly areas where the liaison program is not working well for a variety of reasons. In some instances, individuals are simply ill-suited for outreach. Others may be strong in collection development or gifted classroom instructors and naturally gravitate toward those responsibilities, avoiding others. Rather than trying to impose a more structured top-down approach that is likely to produce the same outcome, we recommend removing the title and assignment altogether. In its place, we recommend adopting a more nimble and strategic team-based service model paired with a new and improved "just-in-time" model of service delivery.

Rather than establishing a set of structured teams, we encourage UTL to adopt and invest in a practice of "teaming" (see Edmondson, A. [Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate, and Compete in the Knowledge Economy](#), Wiley, 2012.) Unlike teams made up of a fixed group of people, a teaming approach pulls individuals with the appropriate skills sets together to address a specific challenge or achieve a specific objective. It permits the organization to respond to issues that require immediate attention, such as the use of copyrighted materials in syllabi, or respond to new opportunities for rich engagement such as advising on Open Access publishing.

A team-based model capitalizes on individuals' strengths while minimizing their weaknesses, and works across the system. As such, it has the potential to strengthen relationships and improve internal communication and processes. Because a teaming model requires significant coordination and someone attentive to the issues of most concern to

faculty, we recommend the Head of Faculty and Student Engagement lead the initiative, in consultation with administrative colleagues.

While we believe a team-based approach offers a number of advantages, we recognize that there remains a need for a “just-in-time” service model that can triage faculty and student requests effectively and efficiently. By consolidating and coordinating outreach and problem-solving activities previously handled or facilitated by liaisons through existing service points could significantly reduce confusion and enhance service delivery. For those librarians who have established relationships with department or individual faculty, they remain the first line of response. For all others, we recommend a new referral model of service guided by clearly outlined service level standards.

Let us offer some hypothetical scenarios to clarify how this hybrid model might work in practice:

Established Liaison Approach Scenario

A professor in Rotman is teaching a class on international finance and wants her students to learn how to find and import global financial data into interactive mapping software to visualize the movement of money across regions. She calls the librarian she has worked with for years. He is comfortable conducting a session on finding global financial data, but reaches out to his colleagues in the Map and Data Library to team-teach the session.

Team-based Approach Scenario

To ease faculty confusion and anxiety over the new Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications, the UTL administration pulls together a team of librarians from different areas with relevant subject and technical expertise needed to develop and deliver a suite of services and/or resources that will help faculty members understand and meet the new requirements. The team, which includes librarians with diverse skills from across the system, is also charged with developing a training and communication strategy that will ensure that all staff members are properly versed in the plan and that faculty members across UT are aware of the services/resources available.

Just-in-Time Approach Scenario

An assistant professor cross appointed with the Department of Religion and Trinity College decides she wants to bring a class in to the Fisher Rare Book Library next week to see the Kierkegaard journals. She doesn't know who she should contact but instead of having to guess, she simply clicks on a bright red button on the UTL website or calls a number on a bright red card she was sent that is posted prominently next to her office computer and places her request. Based on previously agreed upon service standards,

the librarian who receives the request reassures the faculty that they or another librarian will be back in touch soon. They then forward the request to the appropriate librarian in Fischer. The librarian in Fisher contacts the faculty to confirm the details of the class visit and prepares for the upcoming visit, consulting with Trinity colleagues as needed.

3. Liaison Librarian Assignment Approach

Much like the current description of liaison librarian responsibilities, the current list of liaison assignments posted on the UTL website is a potential source of confusion and frustration and presents more of a barrier to service delivery than a realization of its intended aim. As with our recommendations for the program itself, except for those areas where the term liaison is recognized by the faculty and associated with an individual with a clear range of service offerings, the current list of liaison assignments should be eliminated.

Next Steps:

In its place, we recommend promoting a single point of contact faculty can use for all their teaching and research needs, regardless of college, department, program, centre, or other affiliation. Knowledgeable librarians and staff members should be charged with triaging, fulfilling or referring faculty requests as appropriate, once again guided by agreed upon service level standards.

This faculty “easy button” or “hotline” should not supersede existing relationships between librarians and faculty, nor should it impede the development of future relationships. It should simply provide faculty with a clear route to someone who can assist them in fulfilling a request or resolving a library-related issue.

We recommend it be managed by one of the existing service points, such as the Robarts Reference & Research Services, but in close collaboration with Robarts Access & Information Department. It can take the form of an existing or new phone number, email address or chat service. The goal should be to reduce confusion, facilitate access and provide an efficient route to problem or service resolution.

4. Recommended Service Principles

Combine a networked world where a multitude of personal devices connect individuals to the information and the tools/applications they need to answer a question, solve a problem, or accomplish a task with a top-tiered, research-intensive university environment and you naturally have expectations for customized, just-in-time, high-quality services. A statement that articulates UTL’s commitment to service excellence helps manage both the users’ and the providers’ expectations. As a **faculty member**, what type of service can I expect and as a **librarian**, what type of service am I expected to deliver? In addition to

managing expectations, service principles can provide criteria for program planning and assessment plus individual performance management.

The management literature is replete with customer-centric design thinking principles and service quality standards and the library literature offers specific application of both to academic library settings. There is an easy opportunity to adopt and/or adapt from a myriad of best practice examples. However, in our opinion, these service principles must be squarely rooted in cultural values and norms. They must be realistic and measureable; clearly articulated; jointly developed; and continuously assessed. They must also be positioned as a shared responsibility – feedback from the user with analysis and review by the provider.

Next steps:

We recommend that as part of the repositioning of the Faculty Liaison Program, librarians and faculty collaborate on developing service level standards (not just principles) – expectations that “raise the bar” for the program and situate it as a continuous cycle of identifying strategic problems/opportunities; testing approaches; and scaling sustainable solutions that in turn add to UTL’s capabilities and range of services.

While important to have some quantifiable measures, the components should not just focus on “help desk” response-time types of actions (e.g., inquiries are followed up on within 24 hours; resolutions are outlined within 2 business days following clarification/the “interview”). You’ll surface more by spending time articulating how the program’s goals will be met. For example, outline the problem-solving/design principles, project management approach, and research/evaluation methods that will enable continuous learning and capability development across the program. And, whether a group or individual effort, having clear roles and responsibilities articulated, which is central to project management and team effectiveness, is an investment of time, but the only way to set the expectation that faculty requests will be followed up on.

You should also review your performance management, job description/hiring practices, and incentive programs to ensure a consistent approach to assessing how individuals and groups meet the expectations of their roles and responsibilities.

5. Collaboration across Programs, Services, and Providers

Most of the opportunities we explored with the interview participants are complex. It’s highly unlikely that one person would have all the capabilities needed to scope, design, build, deliver, and scale a solution. As well, to support an evolutionary approach, you’ll need to keep a basic level of the current liaison program going. Explicit in this term of reference is the need for mechanisms that enable effective internal collaboration. The diverse types of libraries and the complex structure of the tri-campus, federated and college libraries, and campus/department libraries augmented by a shared, centralized suite of services may not

be well-served by a “top-down” or “one size fits all” structural approach to achieve effective internal collaboration across UTL.

We approach the collaboration challenge from two perspectives: the **individual capabilities** (i.e., the knowledge, skills, and mindsets/values) and **organizational capabilities** (i.e., the strategy, systems/processes, and structures) needed for effective collaboration.

Next steps:

Given the numerous examples of collaboration we heard about, there’s no question that you have a good foundation from which to build, but it needs to be more explicit. Begin by simply “connecting the dots.” Illustrate the many channels in which you engage with faculty; the many ways that you support their work – both proactively and reactively across your functional and special project groups; the many people and positions in UTL engaged in providing faculty services; and, the many UT stakeholders with whom you partner. This is not an inventory/ cataloguing exercise; it’s a communication/awareness-building exercise.

Focus on building individual capabilities not organizational capabilities. Putting energy into what appears to be concrete enablers of collaboration (e.g., tracking systems, referral trees, expertise/yellow pages) offers a low rate of return on the effort.

Establish (or recognize the already established) learning communities/communities of practice at local levels rather than create a system-wide committee to generate the individual capabilities you need to deliver on the user and provider expectations you outline as part of your service principles. Recognize the diversity of good, interesting/innovative, and best practices across the system, creating centres of expertise.

Opportunities

As evidenced throughout this report, UTL’s liaison and outreach programs (formal and informal) have yielded a highly-satisfied and engaged faculty user base. Each focus group had stories of heroic efforts, insightful contributions that had huge impact, and opportunities where even more could be accomplished together with librarians playing a key “thought-leadership” / “trusted advisor” role, not just a service provider role.

Although not explicit in our Terms of Reference, we wanted to include examples of opportunities that we found most compelling, primed for pursuing in alignment with UTL’s strategic priorities:

- Provide leadership for critical needs across the University; maximize your “at the table” status for both local and Ontario/Canada-wide initiatives that are aligned to your priorities.
- Leverage existing University programs and services that support faculty (of which there

appear to be many). Add value to their programs as well as use your engagement as a channel to communicate your services.

- Although this review was focused on the faculty component of UTL's liaison/outreach efforts, staff and faculty both noted the value of a similar program for TAs, graduate/doctoral students, undergraduate students, and other teaching/research providers. As you formalize more user-group programs, look for synergies across these targeted outreach and support services.
- Data management services is a natural follow-on to the more immediate needs faculty are facing with implementing the recently mandated Open Access policies.
- As with any growth and/or change, there's the need to constantly review longstanding programs and their underlying staffing models and organizational structures. In the course of conversations about innovation with faculty, it was clear that there are under-utilized staff providing services that are quite narrow and diminishing in value.
- Collections continue as the mainstay of engagement opportunities for many disciplines and departments. Managing the tension between deep subject expertise and supporting interdisciplinary learning continues to be a challenge for many research-intensive libraries. However, the opportunities to bridge the domains with interdisciplinary course engagement may create a tipping point for UTL.

And last, but not least, of all the opportunities we coded in our notes, this one may be a candidate for your "game changer" category:

- The Canada-wide exploration of the future of medical education. An information-rich, knowledge-dependent virtual network that spans academic and community settings with teams of health-care professionals with heavy reliance on a learning community model to achieve efficiencies and be more effective. (See: "Future of Medical Education in Canada" <http://www.afmc.ca/future-of-medical-education-in-canada/medical-doctor-project/>). UTL could add value across multiple dimensions.

Appendix A: Terms of Reference

University of Toronto Libraries Liaison Librarian Review

1. Assess the [current \(2007\) description of liaison librarian responsibilities](#) for the St. George campus. Comment on how well the current liaison description aligns with the goals of the [UTL Strategic Plan](#) , and the goals related to supporting research infrastructure expressed in the [View from 2012: New & Continuing Challenges \(4th bullet\)](#). Recommend needed changes to the list of liaison librarian activities to meet strategic library and university goals as outlined in these documents.
2. Assess the current structural and administrative model under which liaison librarians across all 3 campuses operate, compared to established best practices at comparable institutions, and recommend any needed structural or administrative changes.
3. Recommend changes to liaison assignments that can make it easier for the U of T community to identify and contact the right librarian.

Liaison librarians on the St. George campus are currently assigned variously to University departments, divisions, institutes, and centres, and disciplines. The list is long, not all departments (e.g. Medicine) are represented, does not support increasing interdisciplinarity, and many important specialists (e.g. copyright, , media specialists, scholarly communication, archivists, digital scholarship) are not included.

4. Recommend any needed service principles to be followed in the handling of inquiries or requests.

Many faculty are unaware that liaison exists. Others find it difficult to identify the right librarian to assist them. Our faculty focus group identified challenges with follow-up on their requests.

5. Consider and recommend mechanisms and approaches to achieve improved internal collaboration among librarians who liaise with faculty.

Because most liaison librarians do not provide services in all aspects of a discipline (i.e., reference, teaching, collection development, technical services), internal referrals to other library staff are frequent. One of the central themes that emerged from our 2014 librarian focus group report was an interest in improved internal collaboration, including consideration of a team-based approach to liaison, triage of incoming requests, and transparency in tracking internal referrals.

In all of the terms above, please pay special attention to issues of scale.

Appendix B: Site Interview Schedule

In order to respect confidentiality, the schedule outlines the groups engaged without identifying the individuals who participated in the discussions.

Tuesday, April 14, 2015

Review background and logistics

Wednesday, April 15, 2015

UTL Executive
Faculty and Chairs Group I
Faculty and Chairs Group II
Teaching and Learning Leaders Group I
Teaching and Learning Leaders Group II
Teaching and Learning Student Related Services

Thursday, April 16, 2015

Research Leadership
Miscellaneous Librarians – Managers, Functional Areas
UTM and UTSC Faculty, Chairs, and Librarians
Campus and College Librarians

Friday, April 17, 2015

Debrief and report outline draft

Appendix C: External Review Panel Bios

Lisa Norberg, M.L.S.
Principal, K|N Consultants

Lisa is a Principal at KN Consultants, a non-profit organization she started in 2013 with Rebecca Kennison. K|N provides strategic and operational guidance via a range of consultation services to academic and research libraries, scholarly societies, university presses, and other mission-driven organizations. In 2015, the team will launch the Open Access Network, a scalable and sustainable plan for open access publishing and archiving in the humanities and social sciences.

Prior to starting K|N, Lisa served as the Dean of the Barnard College Library and Academic Information Services, overseeing the delivery of library and information resources and services and providing classroom and instructional technology infrastructure and support. With close to twenty-five years of academic library experience, she has held positions at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Penn State Harrisburg, and George Mason University. She also serves as an adjunct faculty member at Pratt Institute's School of Information and Library Science where she teaches a course on strategic leadership.

Lisa holds a Bachelors of Science degree in Political Science and a Master's degree in Library Science. Her work and research interests are focused on the organizational transformation of academic libraries, the evolving role of librarians in teaching and learning, and the libraries' role in an open access scholarly information ecosystem.

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Deb Wallace, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Knowledge and Library Services, Harvard Business School

With a team of close to 100 librarians, archivists, economists, statisticians, journalists, and information management professionals housed in Baker Library, Deb oversees a preeminent collection of contemporary and historic business information and a range of custom services for Harvard Business School's diverse community. She is responsible for leveraging the world of business information and the School's priority content to enable high performance in the complex teaching, learning, and research environment at HBS and to further research by scholars from around the world.

A component of Harvard Library, HBS's Knowledge and Library Services is at the vanguard of academic library innovation, experimenting with linked data, semantic data modeling, and digital product development to disseminate faculty research thus creating an information ecosystem in which libraries are integral partners with 21st century scholars.

Deb has been at HBS since 2005. She holds a Masters of Education from the University of Manitoba and a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto.

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