Law Library Assessment:

Results Summary from Faculty Survey and Focus Group

Prepared by the Libraries’ Assessment Resource Office
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1.0 Introduction

The Law Library Assessment project was implemented to collect information on faculty, staff and student use of and opinions about library resources, collections and space, and to provide background data for the April 2014 external review of the Law Library. In this section of the project, faculty members and staff were consulted. This involved the use of two methods: a faculty survey, and a faculty focus group.

2.0 Faculty and Staff Survey

To gather faculty and staff opinions about the Law Library, a five-question, locally-designed survey was implemented between March 13 and April 2, 2014. There were 9 valid survey responses. Responses indicated that:

- Most respondents used the physical library at least once per week (77%).
- 67% of respondents indicated that they use the libraries’ website at least weekly.
- Searching for or borrowing books or print articles was the most popular reason cited for visiting the library (78% of respondents).
- Most respondents indicated that they had worked with a librarian to order materials, or to access research assistance.
- Services, resources or space that were working well:
  - Staff service
  - Having space for clinical law practice in the library
  - Maintenance of physical law reports
- Services, resources or space that were not working well:
  - Communication between library administration and staff
  - Communication with faculty about the libraries’ annual acquisitions cycle
  - Technology in the teaching rooms – needs improvement
  - Librarian availability for research support
  - Changes to the libraries website, making it hard to relearn how to use the site.

3.0 Law Faculty Focus Group

The faculty focus group was conducted with five faculty participants to explore faculty opinions in more depth than was possible in the survey. Questions addressed the following topics: experiences on having collections needs met, and ideas for collection development going forward, availability of librarian and staff support, library space, and any other comments. The following themes emerged from the focus group data.

- Collections:
  - Need for materials were well-met historically. Some areas of the monograph collection lack depth; there are some less-represented areas, as well as some very rich areas. Overall the collections focus had been on Canadian law material and the specific research areas of faculty members. While some looseleafs are very important, others aren’t specifically used for teaching and might be held elsewhere, e.g. the courthouse library, and thus could potentially be cancelled / discarded. Duplicate paper reports could also be potential for cancellations.
  - New faculty should be able to meet with librarians to discuss their research, find out what materials are available, discuss what the library might be able to acquire to support their research, and what would be the faculty member’s responsibility to acquire.
• Research support from librarians:
  o Would like a higher availability of research support assistance.
  o Felt that the current librarians were more connected to the main library than to the law library. Felt that the librarians’ work had changed – previously librarians had assisted with customising EndNote, and gaining copyright permissions for work that faculty wanted to use.
  o Would like to be able to involve librarians in their research projects, and noted that the opinions of faculty are now changing in a positive way regarding involving librarians in projects (changes related to achieving tenure, reduction in value of sole authorship, etc.).

• Space:
  o The renovated library is beautiful, and participants are very happy to be in the space. Described as a sense of ‘focused tranquility’. Some participants use the library as a work space at times.
  o Feelings were mixed regarding classroom 265. Faculty felt that it is not great to have a potentially noisy classroom in the second floor quiet space.
  o Appreciate that the computer lab is available to students.

• Changes to the Law Library:
  o The new head of the Law Library should have a law degree, as well as a faculty appointment, and a strong leadership role within the Faculty of Law, including teaching and co-teaching.
  o The integration of cataloguing and acquisitions with the main library was a shock to faculty. Noted inevitable tension between Law Library and Faculty of Law.

• Services:
  o Changes to the reserve process have been frustrating for faculty who feel that there has been a change made without enough information about how to place items on reserve, or how to change what is on reserve electronically. Would like to be able to look up course reserve lists for classes taught by other faculty.
  o Want to be able to have direct contact with staff when they need help, not have to look up how to use something (e.g. reserve system) online.

4.0 Conclusions

There are several conclusions which can be drawn from the data collected in the survey and focus group:

1. Survey respondents were pleased with the quality of staff service, and are making use of librarians’ assistance. Communication, classroom technology, and librarian availability are areas for improvement.
2. Faculty members want to see a close relationship continue between the law faculty and the Law Library, and want the new Law Library head to be well-integrated with the faculty and librarians at the Law Library.
3. Faculty would like to see the library maintain responsiveness regarding acquiring materials, while developing a clear collections policy around faculty research foci. Also would like the issue of variations in monograph coverage addressed.
4. Feelings were mixed about classroom 265, but were positive about Law Library space overall.
5. There was frustration about the implementation of ARES; faculty felt that work was being downloaded onto them, and were also frustrated by being unable to look at other instructors’ course reserves.