Service Area Review Report: University of Victoria
Libraries August 15, 2017

Executive Summary

The University of Victoria Libraries are functioning extremely well, delivering innovative, high quality services in appealing spaces, staffed by engaged and experienced personnel. The Libraries are valued by the University community and viewed as an important driver of the University's mission. The Libraries were described by numerous stakeholders as 'the heart of the University' and also by a few as the 'door to the campus' or a 'soft entry to higher education'; the University Librarian and the Libraries team members are to be congratulated for their work collaborating with the greater Victoria community, finding new partners, and welcoming new users to the Libraries. The SARC also heard many comments regarding a graceful transition to a 21st Century global library, and we encourage the University Librarian to continue moving the Libraries in this direction.

Recommendation 1: To remain competitive and develop the many competent, engaged librarians at UVic, review the support offered to librarians for research leave and instructional training.

There is perhaps a growing disconnect between the support that is provided to faculty researchers and instructors, and the support provided to librarians as researchers and instructors at UVic. Specifically, the question was raised as to whether study leave options were comparable, and whether librarians had sufficient access to pedagogical development services in the Centre for Teaching and Learning.

Recommendation 2: Reduce the number of service points in UVic Libraries, and delegate basic reference services and related duties to staff as part of a consolidation of services.

While reference transactions have decreased by 28% over the past five years, gate counts and website usage is up by 38% and 17% respectively, which means the Libraries are still heavily used, but the nature of the use is changing over time.

Recommendation 3: Consider the formation of an ad hoc system-wide committee of staff and librarians to design appropriate reference and referral training. Map out a timeline for transition, and develop a plan to assess the service and solve any problems as they arise.

Aside from reference service, there are additional areas across the Libraries where a librarian's time is not required to the same extent as previously: the UVic Libraries already use approval services for acquisitions, shelf-ready materials, and Data-Drive Acquisitions (DDA) or Patron-Driven Acquisitions (PDA) to help preserve the time of librarians for more complex initiatives. In addition, the delegation of some tasks to library staff, such as shift scheduling, room

bookings, the creation of durable links for e- resources, and other user-focused but routine tasks could be considered.

Recommendation 4: To optimize the new Digital Information Fluencies program (DIF), scale up the instructional program by adding modular elements in the Learning Management System.

The Libraries are considering an enhancement to their instructional offerings by developing an exciting Digital Information Fluencies program, to be delivered to all students as a core competency for all citizens. Librarians will need to extricate themselves from scheduled desk shifts in order to teach and support curriculum development in this new area. Consideration for other ways to scale up the instructional program by adding modular elements in the Learning Management System and the shared use of short instructional videos, GIFs, and other learning objects may alleviate the demand on librarian time for more basic instruction.

Recommendation 5: Consider moving the Copyright Office -- including all related responsibilities and personnel -- to report to the Law Librarian, and to be situated in the Law Library.

There is already a constructive working relationship between the Law Librarian and the Copyright Librarian and the SARC believes the university community would benefit from this change in reporting structure.

Recommendation 6: Close the Curriculum Library.

The Curriculum Library is used by a loyal cadre of education students as well as students from other disciplines - especially those who appreciate eating in library space (the Curriculum Library is the only location currently allowing food). However, moving the collection to the MacPherson Library would consolidate the education collection - which is currently split between two buildings - reduce the need to staff a separate service point, and allow for better access to the curriculum collections, given the longer open hours in the MacPherson Library. In addition, there are significant accessibility issues in the Curriculum Library which render it inaccessible to some. Especially in light of the need for seismic upgrades soon, which would necessitate moving the collection temporarily, SARC members concluded that consolidating the collection now and closing the Curriculum Library leads to benefits on several fronts.

Recommendation 7: Allow food and drink in the library's public spaces (except Special Collections).

A more liberal policy for food in the Libraries will change the environment in the spaces, eliminating the need to police the users to ensure compliance, and allow the current student 'monitor' positions, where students patrol the Libraries to enforce the No Food policy, to be repurposed to cover other duties.

Recommendation 8: Maintain Libraries' control over library space and assess benefits of current shared spaces.

The University has been respectful of Libraries' space, and SARC members noted that any movement of non-Libraries units into Libraries spaces has been done in a consultative manner to date, and only in areas where logical synergies were to be gained by a co-location, for instance in the case of the academic partners now situated in the Learning Commons. However, these partnerships should be assessed regularly. For instance, the question was raised as to whether the creation of the Global International Commons has resulted in benefits sufficient to warrant the continuation of the co- located services.

Recommendation 9: Create librarian positions for emerging services such as Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement and Indigenous law, and digital preservation.

The creation of librarian positions for emerging services such as Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement and Indigenous law, and digital preservation would help the University to move forward in these important areas.

Recommendation 10: Continue moving toward team-based planning.

A move to team-based planning and decision making, and more delegation of authority to Libraries staff, would ensure all staff are contributing to their full capacity. Their perspective on staff and patron safety, workflow efficiencies, way-finding, and their observations regarding the current use of the space and future needs will enhance any planning process.

Recommendation 11: Maximize use of student assistants.

A re-evaluation of the use of student assistants, co-op placements and the creation of graduate internships would support the University's interest in growing experiential learning opportunities. Skills acquired by students working in libraries include information management, research skills, study skills, PR and customer service, time management, budgeting, and user experience analysis.

Recommendation 12: Develop a multimodal, multidirectional communications plan.

Develop a Communications Plan that evolves with the Libraries, for communication originating at all levels, with consideration for various channels, times of day, preferred modes of communication, multi-directional communications, and ways to support staff production of communications i.e. graphic design support. A Communications Plan would be especially useful if it had an emphasis on interactive communications, collaborative planning, and opportunities for input at all staff levels. Ways to foster rapid decision-making would be clearly articulated. Coupled with a plan, some staff development to help with the discussion of work priorities, techniques for consultation to manage workloads collaboratively, and project

management skills would be useful at all levels.

Recommendation 13: Provide training for staff in the Indigenous Acumen program

The opportunity to take part in the Indigenous Acumen training directly relates to the university's strategic plan to "engage in mutually supportive, productive and respectful relationships and integrates understandings of Indigenous realities, cultures, histories and beliefs" and this also gives the Libraries a way to engage the TRC's Calls to Action in a demonstrable manner.

Recommendation 14: Conduct an ergonomic analysis.

When financially feasible, an ergonomic analysis of all staff workstations and service delivery practices should be undertaken.

Recommendation 15: Streamline the reporting structure.

The reporting structure at the mid-management level might be reviewed in cases where anomalous direct reports seem to exist for historical rather than functional reasons.

Recommendation 16: Address the US-dollar induced structural deficit.

This difficulty was predicted in the previous Service Area Review of 2011, and has been addressed through the use of diminishing carry forward funds for the past three years.

Recommendation 17: Implement a Collections Policy.

A Collections Policy, which is already in the works, should be completed for the Libraries, including Law, clearly articulating the preference for e-formats, exceptions to this preference, deaccessioning principles, and a description of the consultation process for cancellations.