



SPEC Kit 308

Graduate Student and Faculty Spaces and Services

November 2008

Vivian Lewis

Associate University Librarian, Organizational Analysis, Planning & Accountability
McMaster University

Cathy Moulder

Director of Library Services, Maps, Data & GIS
McMaster University



ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Series Editor: Lee Anne George

SPEC Kits are published by the

Association of Research Libraries

21 Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 800

Washington, DC 20036-1118

P (202) 296-2296 F (202) 872-0884

[http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/spec/
pubs@arl.org](http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/spec/pubs@arl.org)

ISSN 0160 3582

ISBN 1-59407-807-6

978-1-59407-807-1

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SURVEY RESULTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Recently, ARL libraries have begun to experiment with an enriched set of spaces and services to meet the complex teaching, learning, and research needs of graduate students and faculty. Some libraries have introduced small sanctuaries (study rooms or lounges) for graduate students and faculty as distinctly separate from undergraduate spaces. Others are providing new suites of services like dissertation support, curriculum design, and learning object design. In some cases, the services are offered in collaboration with other campus units—perhaps the Faculty Development Office, the Learning Technology Office, or Campus Computing. The new services and spaces may be localized in a discrete area (sometimes called a “Research Commons” or “Faculty Commons”) or opportunistically distributed across the library system.

The Survey on Graduate Student and Faculty Spaces and Services was conducted to explore the variety of resources and services being delivered to or envisioned for this unique population. The survey was distributed via the Web to the 123 ARL member libraries in March 2008. Sixty-five libraries (six Canadian and 59 American) completed the survey by the deadline of April 28 for a 53% response rate. Of these respondents, 48 institutions (74%) indicated that they provide or plan to provide services or spaces specifically designed for the designated populations. Most are providing or designing spaces/services to meet the needs of both groups, with only seven reporting services/spaces exclusively for graduate

students and two locations committed to providing service/space exclusively to faculty. Thirteen of 47 respondents (28%) target discipline-specific graduate students; eight (17%) of these also target a specific group of faculty. In most cases, the targeted groups tend to be in humanities or social sciences.

Developing Graduate Student and/or Faculty Spaces and Services

The ARL libraries responding to the survey reported a wide variety of reasons for introducing services or spaces for these targeted populations. The single biggest motivator was requests from graduate students, reported by 33 institutions (69%), while 25 (52%) reported being influenced by a building renovation or reorganization. Requests from faculty were reported as key factors by 23 respondents (48%), while an equal number reported being persuaded by results of a strategic planning process. Twenty-one libraries reported being influenced by recommendations from library staff.

Respondents employ a wide variety of instruments to gather information about the spaces or services needed—but most reported a reliance on anecdotal feedback. For example, 34 of 43 respondents (79%) reported using informal commentary as part of their decision-making process. Only 20 institutions employed focus groups and only 19 (44%) conducted survey(s) or field observations. Field observations are most frequently used to gather input from library staff, and focus groups and surveys when consulting with faculty or student representatives. Few

institutions reported consulting with key campus stakeholders, with only eight libraries (19%) seeking feedback from their student support services offices and six from their faculty development offices. The reliance on current and best practice is more reassuring, with 19 of 36 sites (53%) reporting that their thinking was influenced by literature searches, and an equal number by site visits and expert opinion. Eighteen institutions (50%) were influenced by sessions at conferences, but only seven sites reported being guided by funded research.

Service Location(s) and Descriptions

The physical models vary considerably. Twenty respondents (48%) reported that services are being delivered from pre-existing service points. Eighteen (43%) reported delivering services from a single discrete location, and 14 (33%) deliver services from several new service points dispersed across their campuses.

The majority of facilities are located in renovated space (23 respondents or 77%); the other seven (23%) are located in a combination of new and renovated spaces. No respondents reported placing a service in newly constructed space. The vast majority of respondents (91%) indicated that they provide services to faculty and graduates within the main campus library. A smaller but still sizable percentage (44%) indicated that services are provided within branch libraries; only four respondents said that they offer services in non-library buildings on campus (typically departmental offices or academic buildings).

In some cases, the exclusive nature of the facility or service is designated in its name. Respondents reported a variety of facility names (e.g., the Faculty Support Center, Graduate Student Success Center, Retired Faculty Research Room, Center for Faculty Excellence). Some incorporate the word “Commons” in their name to denote the concept of a gathering place (e.g., Faculty Commons, Research Commons, Scholarly Commons).

Most libraries reported some flexibility in the exclusivity of these services. For example, 26 of 39 respondents (67%) indicated that, although the ser-

vices had been designed for faculty and/or grads, others could use them under some circumstances. One noted that, although only faculty or grads could reserve the space, others could use it on a drop-in basis. Another noted that the space is typically used for the targeted group but is sometimes opened up for public events. Only 13 institutions (33%) reported that the services were always for the exclusive use of faculty and/or graduate students.

In terms of administrative structure, 37 of the 40 responding institutions report through the library—sometimes to a library director and other times to an AUL, branch head, or other high level administrator. Three institutions also described some accountability to the Provost and one to an academic dean, while one facility also reports through a campus advisory committee. The two facilities that report outside the library are accountable to a CIO or the senior director of the campus computer organization.

Respondents reported a broad range of space offerings, the most common being study seating, lounge seating, and collaborative rooms. Almost all respondents (37 or 90%) provide individual/quiet study seating—six designate this for graduate students exclusively and two for faculty only. Lounge seating is provided at 24 sites (59%)—nine exclusively for graduate students, two exclusively for faculty. Eighteen libraries (44%) provide collaborative rooms, six to graduate students only and three to faculty only. Fewer institutions provide socializing space (12 or 29%), with one restricting this to graduate students and two to faculty exclusively.

Other spaces of interest include recording/video-taping rooms (10 sites or 24%), training spaces (nine or 22%), presentation practice spaces (eight or 20%), performance spaces (seven or 17%), and classrooms (seven or 17%).

The percentage of space allocated to various functions varies considerably. Twenty-six of 29 responding libraries report that space for quiet study and reflection ranges from 10% to 100% of the total space they are providing for faculty and graduate students, with a mean of 73%. Nineteen respondents report that louder collaborative work spaces ranges from 5% to

100% of their total, but the average amount of space devoted to this use is significantly smaller, about 33%. The percentage allocation of space for other purposes is too small to be useful to the study.

Services Provided

Thirty-six libraries responded to the set of questions on which technology services are provided to faculty and grad students. Although a few institutions maintain study spaces without technology, the vast majority (32 of 36 or 89%) provide access to computers, either desktop or loaning laptops. Seven institutions provide both desktop and laptop computers for the use of both faculty and graduate students. Of the others, 17 provide desktop computers and 11 provide laptops. Reproduction equipment, display surfaces, and computer peripherals are the next most frequently provided technologies, and this equipment is rarely for the exclusive use of either faculty or grad students. Software workshops or assistance are provided by 39% of respondents (14 institutions), with most reporting that both user groups are offered this service. A surprising number of institutions (11 or 31%) reported staff-mediated services for printing and scanning; eight of these (22%) also offer staff-mediated digitization.

Most of the research support offered to these populations by the 27 responding institutions are standard library services. The overwhelming majority (26 or 96%) offer reference or research help, whether remote, from a service desk, or by appointment; 48% offer all three of these options. Of the nine institutions that choose to offer only one type of reference service, eight provide remote reference/research help and one offers appointment-based help. Sixteen institutions offer either numeric data or GIS services; 11 of these offer both. Citation management software and assistance is widely offered (20 institutions or 74%), and only four limit this service exclusively to one group or the other.

A few institutions provide services that are more unique. One offers services for organizing conferences and colloquiums, one organizes and publicizes talks by experts, and another coordinates a graduate

student workshop series. Several respondents also mentioned media support.

Seventeen of the responding institutions offer teaching support services, most (14 or 82%) offer instructional skills workshops and assistance; only one of these limits this service to faculty. Eleven institutions (65%) offer both instructional skills and educational technology workshops, and six of these also offer learning object creation workshops, indicating there is synergy in this combination of services. Six institutions offer video conferencing services and four of them also provide vodcasting and podcasting; three others offer podcasting only.

Eighteen institutions reported offering personal growth services (personal counselling, dissertation completion support, writing clinic, etc.) to graduate students and faculty in library service spaces. Traditional library information literacy/bibliographic instruction sessions are most common, but it is surprising that this category was not more widely reported—only 15 of the 37 libraries that answered service questions indicated that they are providing information literacy or bibliographic instruction for grad students and faculty. Comments suggested that more institutions are offering personal growth services, but not exclusively to these populations. Four institutions offer both academic content development and writing/editing services in combination. One institution offers special services to international graduate students.

Partnerships

Forty-four institutions responded to the set of questions about partnering with other campus units to provide services to faculty and graduate students. Thirty-one (70%) indicated that they partner with at least one campus unit; 13 reported no such partnerships. Twenty-seven of the 31 (87%) partner with at least the campus computing center. Of the other four, one partners with the writing center and office of research; one partners with the faculty development/teaching excellence office and the graduate student development office; another partners with faculty development, grad student development, and the

writing center; the fourth reported that its sole partnership is with the office of research for grant writing. Eight respondents report that their sole partnership is with campus computing. The other 19 have partnerships with campus computing and at least two other campus units; 16 maintain partnerships with four or more campus units. In addition to the six categories of partners included in the survey, respondents mentioned other partners, including the Provost, Study Partners tutoring service, Intercollegiate Athletics, the Art Department, the Office of Campus-Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, Career Services, and campus food services.

Overwhelmingly, these partnerships are informal, without contracts or Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). Most formal agreements are made with campus computing, where eight institutions document some arrangements and two institutions document all arrangements. One institution noted that an MOU is in place with the Learning Technologies office for some shared classrooms, and another reported that some arrangements with the writing center are documented. No written agreements were reported with Faculty Development offices, Graduate Studies, and the Offices of Research. Several institutions commented that they have a partnership with the campus writing center, but that no services are provided specifically for faculty and/or graduate students.

Service Point Staffing

Ten institutions reported on staff working at service points specifically designated for graduate students and/or faculty. Overall, the results show that presently very few staff members are dedicated to providing services for faculty and graduate students. The lowest staffing level reported was one individual and the highest was 60, with an average staffing complement of 13.5. Seven of the respondents reported between one and eight individuals (for an average of 4.9). The respondent that reported roughly 16 staff provides services in renovated space, the Digital Social Science Center, within a branch library. The respondent that reported 25 staff provides services in the Faculty Commons within the main library. The library that

reported the highest number of staff (60) explained, “A planned renovation of the first two floors of the main library will be referred to as the Knowledge Commons. The new Knowledge Commons will include a new Center for Faculty Excellence.”

Nine institutions identified a director or coordinator position specifically responsible for overseeing spaces and/or services for graduate students and/or faculty. Of the position titles supplied, only one appears to be a position exclusively dedicated to these researchers (Head of Graduate Services). All other position titles seem to indicate a broader responsibility, including faculty and grad services with other more general services.

In all but a few cases, libraries and their partners used a combination of strategies to fill staff positions. Seven of 11 libraries redefined job descriptions of existing staff, four of which were reassigned. Four of the seven also created new positions, as did two libraries’ partners. In another case, the library and its partner both reassigned staff. In yet another, the partner alone redefined and reassigned staff. In only two cases did the library and/or its partner simply create a new position.

Marketing/Outreach

The majority of respondents (33 of 41 respondents or 80%) indicated that they do not have a formal marketing plan in place to promote spaces and services for faculty and graduate students. Several mentioned that these services are included in their overall marketing strategy and others indicated that promotion for these services is in the planning stages.

Word of mouth is the most frequently reported method of promoting these spaces and services (used by 93% of respondents), but most institutions do not rely on this strategy alone. Only one institution said: “... we purposefully depend only on word of mouth and do not market their availability. There is always a waiting list for these spaces.” An equal number of institutions (28 or 68%) use the library Web site, printed literature, such as brochures and bookmarks, and faculty and graduate student orientation sessions as ways of reaching these groups. Visits to faculty

and graduate student meetings and targeted e-mail announcements are also frequently used. On average, libraries are using more than five marketing strategies in combination, with a few institutions (5 of 40) using all of the traditional methods included in the survey. In addition to these methods, several institutions also mentioned more innovative marketing strategies, such as separate research commons Web sites, plasma screens in a Faculty Commons, public computer screen savers, office hours in departmental offices, specific identification on building floorplans and signage, receptions, and Facebook ads for grad students.

Statistics and Assessment

A surprising number of institutions (32%) do not keep any statistics on graduate student and/or faculty use of spaces and services. Of the institutions that do keep track, most use one or more of the fairly traditional methods of quantifying library services, such as session counts, head and gate counts, and questions answered. Only seven institutions reported using Web or print comments, another traditional library method of gathering user feedback. Comments revealed that at least six institutions monitor space use by recording carrel and room bookings or access cards issued. Two institutions record document delivery service use. One institution indicated that they monitor grants received and another “statements in dissertations.”

Most libraries use some method for evaluating faculty and graduate student satisfaction with their spaces and services. A surprisingly low number (6 of 41 respondents) make no formal assessment efforts. A large number (63%) participate in LibQUAL+®. Only two institutions rely on LibQUAL+® alone; most use it in conjunction with one or more additional methods of assessment. Most of the assessment methods employed are voluntary and, other than LibQUAL+®, solicit opinions from users rather than non-users of library services. Most of the satisfaction measures in use are qualitative and fairly traditional. Only one institution indicated participation in a broad-based research study.

Conclusion

Clearly, ARL libraries continue to experiment with a variety of space and service models to support the teaching, learning, and research needs of faculty and graduate students on their campuses. The new models are being triggered by a variety of forces — most notably by explicit requests from graduate students and, to a lesser extent, faculty themselves. Survey respondents have adopted a variety of instruments for gathering input into space and service design but have, to date, relied fairly heavily on anecdotal feedback.

Many sites support a relatively traditional buffet of spaces — but have repackaged them in new ways for this targeted population. Virtually all sites provide the standard library spaces (e.g., study seating, lounge seating, and collaborative study), but in many cases, have allocated discrete areas for their faculty and graduate students. The non-traditional offerings run the full gamut — from fully-equipped classrooms to 3D visualization spaces.

The service models also vary considerably. The reported models feature a strong emphasis on traditional services (reference/research help, interlibrary loan, etc.) — but again reimaged to meet the distinct needs of faculty and graduate students. The services support a heavy emphasis on technology. A significant number of ARL libraries are providing teaching support services within their spaces. Few sites are providing personal growth services (personal counselling, dissertation completion support, writing clinic, etc.) — other than the traditional information literacy sessions.

During this development phase, many sites are adopting flexible approaches: spaces and services are designed with faculty and graduate students in mind — but other populations are often allowed to use them under some circumstances.

Sites report relationships with multiple partners — most often their campus computing unit and, to a lesser extent, their faculty development/teaching excellence office. The small number of sites reporting relationships with other campus units (e.g., graduate student development offices, writing centers, research

office) was surprising. The lack of formal documentation for these partnerships was a point of concern.

ARL member libraries employ a variety of instruments for publicizing their spaces and services for this population — but very few have formal marketing plans. Very few keep discrete statistics or evaluate their deliverables beyond the traditional general library assessment tools.

Further research is required to determine the success of these new services and spaces over time. Still to be discovered are how satisfied users are with the new offerings, how sustainable the new service models will be over time, and ultimately, what impact these new deliverables will have on the teaching, learning, and research conducted by faculty and graduate students.