

Learning Commons Committee

May 7 2013 10 am - 12 pm

Room 503, Scott Library (5th floor)

http://www.library.yorku.ca/cms/learning-commons_committee/



Agenda

1. Notes from March 5 meeting
 - Business arising
2. Information items
 - Learning Commons Ambassadors
 - LibAnswers
 - Learning Commons Statistics
 - Learning Commons Hub Survey
3. Discussion:
 - Orientation 2013: What role can the Learning Commons play in orientation?
4. Subcommittee reports
 - Faculty (Sophie Bury)
5. Scheduling next meeting
6. Other Business?

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Rm 503, Scott Library



Notes

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Present: S. Bury, J. Dupuis, N. Majekodunmi (Chair), A. McKenzie, C. Salole, E. Sims, T. Scott, D. Twombly

Regrets: P. MacFarlane, C. Popovic, J. Spencer, P. Warren

1. Notes from March 5, 2013 meeting were approved.

2. Information items:

- **Learning Commons Ambassadors** (N. Majekodunmi)

The York Libraries has approved the proposal to hire two Learning Commons Ambassadors (LCA) for fall 2013. The Libraries will fund the positions with the hope that they will qualify for subsidy through the YES (York Engaged Students) work/study program. The job posting will be posted through the Career Centre when the call for YES positions is initiated (early June). A draft of the job description was distributed. Suggestions for improving the job advertisement included listing interpersonal and oral communication skills first for required qualifications/skills; adding "excellent written communication skills" as well as adding "experience with social media" instead of blogging as a qualification/skill. N. Majekodunmi will revise the job description accordingly. We anticipate hiring before August, with training in place before orientation in September. K. Grewal (Scott Research & Collections) will supervise the LC Ambassadors, but will be in contact with representatives from each unit to coordinate training schedules.

- **LibAnswers** (J. Dupuis)

The York Libraries' website will be launching LibAnswers in June. LibAnswers is a knowledgebase (KB) of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and their answers. It has two functions. For the library user (including any library staff), it's a place to pose a question and find its answer, without needing to contact library staff. If no satisfactory answer is found, the user can then submit the question to staff and receive an answer by e-mail. A search box for LibAnswers will be on the library homepage. Other libraries using LibAnswers include the University of Toronto at <http://answers.library.utoronto.ca/>. Frequently asked

Learning Commons-related questions will be included in LibAnswers. Each unit will be asked to submit questions and answers for LibAnswers. Career Services has already submitted their FAQs. N. Majekodunmi will follow up with the other units.

- **Learning Commons Statistics (N. Majekodunmi)**

N. Majekodunmi distributed a brief report of the Learning Commons Hub statistics from 2010-2013. The statistics cover the Learning Skills, Writing Instruction and Research Drop-in services (number of questions answered, questions answered per hour and duration of sessions). The 2010 figures are slightly skewed due to late date moving into the newly renovated LC Hub in late October 2010. The survey is only a snapshot of numbers served.

Learning Skills Services numbers are low. This could be because of lack of awareness or knowledge of what “learning skills” really mean. Perhaps we can rename/re-brand to “academic success skills”? If we can track repeatedly late students or no-shows we may be able to refer them to Learning Skills Services (take a more active approach to referring students either through faculty or directly). Low numbers could also be tied to timing of when learning skills are vital (e.g. earlier on in the term, before students bombarded by assignments). Students want just-in-time help for research and writing because of assignment due dates, often neglecting the umbrella learning skills (time management, critical thinking, note-taking, reading etc.) that they need to succeed overall. We need to target first year students earlier on in the term. One suggestion was to have early September workshops (e.g. Introduction to Academic Success). The Learning Commons’ role in orientation is important to address some of these issues.

It was also suggested that the LC can promote 1 important skill (timed to students’ needs) on a rotating basis. What are they in dire need of in September? November? (e.g. SOS workshops).

It was generally felt that the Committee also needs to evaluate how students are using the services and student satisfaction. How to measure success is always challenging. Are we successful if students don’t return to us for help or if they do return back? Are students not using the LC because of the perception that only struggling students need to use these services? How do we find this out? Scott Research and Collections is planning to evaluate the research services (drop-in and appointment) in the fall. For example, who comes to the research drop-in desk vs the appointment desk? Are high achievers using the research appointment services and struggling students using the drop-in? How can we tailor our services to these students? This might be a good opportunity to work with Learning Commons partners to help assess who our students are and how they use the LC Hub services.

Possible ways to evaluate our services may include:

- performing exit interviews for students who don’t return to our service (but the question remains as to how to identify them if they use our drop-in services and we have no way to contact them).

- Looking at statistics for other writing satellite services such as Bethune and Stong
- Look at peak hours for each service to help set service hours

Some of these ideas can be discussed further at the next August meeting when the Committee will discuss 2013/2014 goals.

- **Learning Commons Hub Survey** (N. Majekodunmi)

Normally a spring meeting is scheduled for staff working in the LC Hub. However, this year N. Majekodunmi forwarded a quick survey to Learning Skills specialists and writing instructors working in the LC Hub. The purpose of the survey was to get feedback about working in the Hub, challenges and best practices. Survey responses were distributed. Issues mentioned included privacy, signage, addressing the line-ups, and equipment needs. Possible solutions suggested included:

- Using card readers might address the line-ups and as a source for getting data on our students (there will be issues of privacy/confidentiality)
- Using sign-up sheets at the Writing Instruction pod with only 8 slots to avoid disappointing students who won't be served in the 2 hr slot
- Having chairs along the wall for students to wait for writing help
- Learning Commons Ambassadors can help to direct traffic in the LC Hub (students sitting on pod seats, line-ups etc.)

3. Discussion:

Orientation 2013 – (J. Dupuis/ C. Salole)

What role can the Learning Commons play in orientation 2013?

A draft working paper for Orientation 2013 by Janet Morrison was circulated prior to the meeting. Janet Morrison is Chair of a 1st year experience group looking at how York can support first year student. Martha Rogers is leading a YU Start pilot on how to prepare first year students over the summer. J. Dupuis is part of YU Start. Currently orientation is disconnected on campus. There is no central coordination. This group is working on improving orientation starting with the 2013 orientation. Orientation is Labour Day (Sept. 2) to the Sunday before classes begin. The goal is to combine both social and academic orientation. There are 2 opportunities for the Learning Commons to be involved in student transition: YUStart and Orientation. Ideally we would like to be involved in the tours of the library/Learning Commons. There is a lot of misinformation presented at these tours (usually college tours). What can the LC implement this year? In the past the Learning Commons participated in scavenger hunts whereby students located the LC Hub and found pamphlets about the library/Learning Commons. It was stressed that the LC needs to look at learning outcomes. What do we need for students to learn about the Learning Commons?

It was suggested that this was an opportunity for involvement in the University 101 programming mentioned in the working draft (particularly Learning Skills). Teaching Commons

can make faculty more aware of what is covered in University 101 and what faculty can do in their own class to build on University 101 content.

The Learning Commons Ambassadors might be able to play a role in orientation this year if they are trained in time before September 2. The LC can liaise with the designated Orientation Coordinator (TBA). N. Majekodunmi will identify and follow up with the Office of Students orientation coordinator as well as C. Salole. On May 28 C. Salole, C. Popovic, T. Scott and other LC members will participate on discussion group about YU Start.

4. Scheduling meetings: Members will be contacted with August dates. Mark Robertson will return in August as Chair of the Learning Commons.
5. Subcommittee Report:

Faculty (S. Bury)

S. Bury (Co-chair with R. Sheese) distributed the Faculty Subcommittee Report (see attached). The group mainly focused on the AIF project "Supporting Academic Literacy Instruction Within Courses". The Learning Commons has partnered with the Teaching Commons to work with faculty to focus on academic literacies in the classroom. The goal is to have a summer institute in place for summer 2014. The faculty focus groups and literature review are complete. The results from the focus groups informed programming for the summer institute. S. Bury and R. Sheese presented Teaching Commons brown bag session on developing students' critical skills. They will also participate in a course design event at York which will focus on academic literacy and how to integrate AL into the curriculum. S. Bury and R. Sheese are also presenting their work this summer at the Workshop for Instruction in Library Use (WILU) and Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STHLE). The Faculty Subcommittee would like to share with Learning Commons partners what they've learned from the focus groups and literature review in the near future.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm