What’s on Your Mind? Connecting with Students through a Library Advisory Committee

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Carleton University
Canada’s Capital University
Quick Facts About Carleton University

• Comprehensive University- built in 1942 to meet the needs of returning WWII veterans
• 25,000 FTE undergraduate
• 3500 graduate
• 1 library
Goals for SLAC?

• To enhance library services to better meet evolving student needs.

• To engage in open conversation about library resources and services.

• To provide constructive feedback to help improve library resources, services, & physical/digital spaces
We’re not the first...

• Inspired by:

  UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA LIBRARIES
  Ryerson University Library & Archives
  UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
  UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
  DUKE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
  Brock University
  UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
  LAURIER

• ...and others
Logistical ideas

- # times to meet
- Food
- Application form
- Council/committee membership
- Expectations
- Benefits
Benefits?

**Students**
- Help improve the student experience at the library!
- Add to your resume!
- Learn more about your library!
- Gain committee experience!
- Meet new people!
- Free meal!

**Staff**
- Better understanding of student needs
  - Physical space
  - Technology
- Insight into student expectations – helps with quality improvement
- Help prioritize services for improvement
Recruitment

• End of September/beginning of October

• Accepted 7 graduate; 7 undergraduate
Meeting 1: Planning Activity

• Flipchart & post-its:
  – Something that frustrates you about the library
  – A change you’d like to see
  – Something you would like to know or learn about while on the committee
  – A good way for the library to communicate with students

What resonates with you?

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Meeting 2- Choose top 3- then anonymous SurveyMonkey Vote

HELP/ORIENTATION
- Orientation for new students
- Workshops as VOD on library website
- More instructions on how to use library
- Student research mentors for undergrads
- Student volunteers roving in library to help
- Contest for 1st years visiting library early intern
- Mandatory ½ course on using the library
- Help for U&O students using Carleton & for Carleton students who want to use U&O library

BUILDING ISSUES
- More comfy chairs/tables
- Early opening/late closing
- Lockers
- Pillows for floor seating
- Adjustable chairs (bad issues)
- Adjustable chairs (sleeping)
- More seating (chairs)
- Hard to find a group study room
- Improve publicity about room booking
  - Signs on doors

✓ Improve access to working markers

✓ Place to eat food on quiet floors

✓ Place to eat "smelly" or "noisy" food (ie-food policy)

✓ Posters reminding of rules

✓ Provide prayer room

✓ Physical suggestion box
Winter Term Meeting Themes

- Orientation for new students
- Student Research Mentors (peer support)
What worked

• Great feedback/great discussions
• Set the tone ("ground rules")
• Post-its/flipchart plus emails/surveys afterward gave everyone a voice

• “mini focus groups”
Mitigating Expectations

National Environment Research Council...and others.  
Challenges- Finding Balance
• Recommendations:
  – Have some topics already in place- have them choose which topics

  – Get senior staff involved- what are YOUR priorities/needs from SLAC
Other Challenges

• Expectation to recruit/participate/share new knowledge - not entirely met
  – Exceptions: process mapping exercise

• Schedule - Tricky to get time that worked for most

Flickr photo courtesy of Dafne Cholet: Accessed 5/6/14
Looking to the Future

• Schedule to allow more members to attend more meetings (stagger times)

• Increase opportunities to do outreach & engage with peers

• Look into co-curricular credit for committee members