Executive Summary

- **Scope and Objective:** The Service Excellence Team commissioned the UX Team to conduct interviews with users to uncover their behaviours, experiences, expectations, and perceptions with regards to Library services. Twenty-two semi-structured interviews were conducted by the UX Team with faculty and students, using the questions provided by the Service Excellence Team. There was at least one participant from every college at the University of Guelph except OVC.

- **Major Findings:**
  1. **Establishing personal connections with the Library is extremely important for faculty engagement.** This personal contact, most often a librarian, is the primary means through which faculty communicate with the Library, make use of our services, and become aware of other services. Not only do faculty with a Library connection tend to make use of more than one service, but they are also more likely to be repeat customers than those without a Library contact.
  2. **New faculty who lack a personal contact at the Library feel “lost” when it comes to interacting with the Library.** Because there is confusion around whom to contact, new faculty are both unaware and non-users of our services.
  3. **Most users do not know who to contact at the Library.**
     - Most students have not asked for Library help mainly because they don’t know the range of support the Library can offer. When pressed, students said if they wanted help from the Library they would probably go to the Ask Us Desk first.
     - Faculty on the other hand, will contact whomever they have an established relationship with at the Library. Faculty would rather contact someone they know immediately than navigate the website or the campus phone directory.
  4. **Most users are unaware of the range of services we offer.**
  5. **Faculty think that Library staff in-depth subject expertise is “not hugely important”.** They also believe it is an unrealistic expectation of the Library.
  6. **Users do not know about our organizational structure.**
     - Students do not make distinctions between Library staff members. They expect that any staff member should be able to help them.
     - The few faculty that do know about our organizational structure found it confusing and surprisingly complex.
  7. **When asked if Library staff have met their needs, users overwhelmingly said yes.** Users indicated that when they have interacted with a staff member, it has been a positive experience. This seemed like a commentary on the helpful and well-intentioned nature of staff. Several faculty also indicated that they did not have a lot of needs to be met.
     - “They have met my needs because I haven’t really had many needs. I guess I can’t really say because if I used the Library a lot I would have more interaction with living human beings which to this point has been fairly minimal.”

**Background**

- **Interview:** Semi-structured; 15 questions (appended); interviews transcribed.
• **Interviewees:** 12 faculty and 10 students (5 graduates and 5 undergraduates) from every college except OVC.

## Findings

### A. **Students:**

**How are students interacting with the Library?**
- Undergraduate students primarily use the Library for study space. Graduate students mainly interact with the Library through online resources.
- However, undergraduate students also made use of a wide range of Library services most frequently SLGs and Writing Services.

**Can students easily access resources?**
- Overwhelmingly, yes.
- However, there was a sense that if they couldn’t access a specific article or book they would just use another resource that was more accessible.
- Barriers preventing access:
  - Lack of awareness. “I guess the fact that I don’t know about all of the resources is technically a barrier”;
  - Booking Writing Appointments; and
  - RACER.

**Do students know who to contact at the Library to get help?**
- Not really.
- Undergraduate students don’t look to contact a specific person at the Library mainly because they don’t understand or care about the various roles of Library staff. They expect that any staff member should be able to help them.
- Often students don’t realize the wide range of support the Library offers and therefore don’t think to turn to the Library for help.
- The Ask Us desk is the first place students would go to get Library help.
  - “If I’m not at the Library then I have zero ideas about what I would do”.
- Amongst the undergraduates interviewed, there was some concern over emailing the Library’s general account. They felt intimidated by a single general email and often doubted the worthiness of their question.
  - “I guess when I was early in my undergrad I didn’t want to just start sending emails to the wrong people and now I just don’t care”.
  - “In all honesty, when I found out it was one general email for the entire Library I stopped at that point because I’m like ‘It’s not going to go to the right person anyway, so why do it?’”.

**Was the first Library staff contacted able to help?**
- Yes.

**Do students think subject expertise is important?**
- Not really.
  - “To be honest with you, it would be nice but I don’t think it is really necessary. As long as they have at least some knowledge more generally rather than subject specific, that’s good enough”.

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Have Library staff met students’ needs?
- Yes and overwhelmingly so.
- Again students’ responses were focused on actual interactions with staff members which means they had to either know what to do, who to contact, or already be in the Library. So although students reported that they are satisfied, there are still issues. They don’t know about the range of our services; they don’t use our website; and they experience frustration over a variety of topics.

Have students perceived a change over the years with respect to Library service?
- No.
  - “I think some of the services are different, but I wouldn’t say that service itself has really changed... I think going from 1st year to 5th year it has been consistently good and helpful”.

What recommendations do students have?
- More electrical outlets;
- Create a workshop for “finding stuff”;
- Open 24 hours;
- Make ebooks more user friendly; and
- Make the closing alarm less intrusive.
  - “I was so scared when it happened. I never see it on the website or anywhere else that there is even an alarm. It is just kind of something you find out when it happens”.

B. Faculty:

How are faculty interacting with the Library?
- The major theme to emerge from these interviews was that establishing a personal relationship with faculty is extremely important. Faculty continually rely on their specific Library contact for recurring support across a variety of topics. This contact is also the most important communication channel for faculty to learn about other services. Even those faculty with a Library connection acknowledged that having an ‘in’ at the Library was beneficial.
  - “So once you are kind of tapped into it then there is a nice system of referring around”.
  - “I think I do benefit from having been here long enough that I do know who to contact”.
- Faculty primarily use the Library for our collections and Course Reserves. Those faculty that have an established relationship with a Library staff member are more likely to be aware of student services and tend to make referrals (mainly to Writing Services).
  - Faculty don’t know the suite of services offered. However once faculty start making use of a service they tend to be repeat customers. Another effect is that they become aware, through internal referrals from Library staff, of other relevant services.
  - “I think to know just the diversity of services, you need to have used some of them”.
- Interestingly enough, some faculty still browse the stacks hoping for serendipitous discovery. Several older faculty were fondly reminiscing about going to the Library and reading newly acquired journals. There is a sense that faculty miss the physical and more tangible experience of going into the Library and interacting with the materials.

Can faculty easily access resources?
- Yes, for the most part.
• Barriers preventing access:
  o Primo is a major issue amongst faculty.
    ▪ “I find that the interface is just awful...Honestly I just haven’t used it in years because I just got so frustrated with the system. Even looking for journals, I find it also really cumbersome to use. It’s not straightforward. We get all of these popup windows and then it takes you to this other website when you click on something but it doesn’t take you to right where you want to go”;
    ▪ “I find it really clunky...It doesn’t identify what I need. It brings in all of this stuff and it’s not very precise at all. So yeah I don’t use Primo at all”.
    ▪ “Primo is not very helpful. Primo promises something it does not deliver...I don’t know how things are tagged and how it pulls out the things it does. I don’t understand why it doesn’t pick up things that it should and that is a nuisance”; and
    ▪ “Primo is terrible”.
  o Books they require are often not on site.
    ▪ “The thing that really annoys me is that many of the books I need right now aren’t here”.
  o Lack of awareness of services.

Do faculty know who to contact at the Library to get help?
• Not really.
  o “The website is not all that user friendly for finding people for specific tasks. If I were to suggest an improvement that would be it”.
  o “If there was a section on the website just for faculty that would be perfect. I would probably utilize it. I think probably newer faculty like myself would appreciate that”.

• Again the importance of personal connections is stressed. Faculty contact whomever they know at the Library regardless of the nature of their inquiry or the role of their specific contact. Faculty would rather go through a system of referrals from their primary contact than spend the time themselves trying to find the appropriate contact person.
  o “To me the personal relationships end up being more important than ever even with all of our thousands of ways of interacting now. This idea at the Library of ‘teams’ is fine, but it does not help me to know that there is somebody to contact that will know what I need”.

• The few faculty that are aware of the organizational structure find it complex and confusing.
  o “You can’t just say so and so works at the Library because that is not enough information. There are the 5 or 6 major departments and they all have a head and subgroups within and then I’m not sure if there are directors, and all of this. I’m thinking what level of the hierarchy is that? Is that one of the big levels or a sub level within? Most people don’t care but as Associate Dean I’ve been trying to wrap my head around how the Library is organized”.

Was the first Library staff contacted able to help?
• Most often yes, but if not, faculty were understanding of the process.
• Faculty are most concerned about timely responses. They don’t mind being referred to another staff member as long as contact is established within a reasonable length of time. Faculty direct inquiries to their primary contact with the understanding that they may be referred to someone else.
Do faculty think subject expertise is important?
- No. The consistent exception was that general subject expertise for statistical and technical support “would be nice”.
  - “I would not expect someone working in the Library to have technical expertise in a lot of different fields because none of us do. It’s like I wouldn’t expect a physiologist to come in here and be an expert on their field and they in mine”.

Have Library staff met faculty needs?
- Yes. Faculty were for the most part pleased with their interactions with Library staff.
  - “I’ll just end by saying, every single one of the librarians I have ever dealt with has been absolutely fantastic”.
  - However the following was also a common sentiment, “I don’t really know that I have too many needs that they need to meet, so I would say yes because I can go online and get what I need”.

Have faculty perceived a change over the years with respect to Library service?
- No, in terms of the level of service received. Yes, in terms of types of services offered.
  - “The Library has only gotten better”.
  - “I don’t think there has been a change in the service...I just think the whole information environment has just become so much more complex. Are you folks keeping up with the complexity? I think you would know better than me in terms of that”.
  - “I would say it has changed in a sense of just different ways of making information available. There seems to be all of these people working in there but they don’t have anything to do with books”.
  - “It looks like students actually use the Library but not for the ways that it used to be used. I guess I’m impressed to see the evolution of space usage”.

What recommendations do faculty have for the Library?
- Expanded systematic review and statistical support offerings.
  - “My main beef would be that we need a really strong statistical person on campus so we can go for the national grants...And of course systematic reviews and the emphasis on statistical support has only been increasing. It has not been decreasing”.
- More collaboration. Some ideas include:
  - A greater focus on revenue generation like co-creating advanced practice certificates;
  - Working with the School of Computer Science to (1) create a Maker Space in the Library or (2) improve our web presence; and
  - Librarians having involvement or greater involvement in research methods courses.
- Website more targeted to faculty.
- Discontinue the purchasing of e-books.
- More targeted communication with faculty.
  - “The one thing I would say is that the Library is not getting the message out to faculty about what the Library can do for them because this conversation was an eye opener to me”.
  - “So while you have all of the information on your webpage, let’s face it, no one goes to the webpage and starts looking for something and if they are not looking it is like ‘everyone that’s not in this room please stand up’”.


Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Undergraduate / Graduate / Faculty?
2. Year of study / Year with University?
3. Academic Discipline?
4. In what ways do you interact with the Library?
   a. What services do you use?
   b. What resources do you use?
5. Can you easily access the Library resources and services that you want?
   a. Are there barriers to access?
6. Have you ever contacted someone in the Library to get help?
   a. In your experience, was the first person you contacted able to help you?
   b. How important is it to you that this person has some subject expertise in your discipline?
7. Do you know who to contact at the Library to get what you want?
8. Overall, have Library staff met your needs?
9. How long have you been at the university?
10. Have you perceived a change over the years with respect to service at the Library?

** Designed by the Service Excellence Team