

MAUT-LS Discussion Papers on Governance-Related Committees

Discussion Paper #2: Procedural Questions to Consider

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Preface

The present document is the second in a series of discussion papers being prepared by the Executive of the MAUT Librarians' Section on the subject of governance-related committees. The first paper presented some opening considerations and provided a list of committees. The second paper outlines some questions to be considered regarding how governance-related committees should be established and filled. The third paper will present some case study materials on nomination and election processes. Additional discussion papers, potentially including recommendations from the MAUT-LS Executive, may be prepared thereafter.

Scope

This discussion paper covers some of the elements which are involved in establishing governance-related committees and in selecting members for them. The paper focuses mainly on the kinds of questions which will need to be considered during the forthcoming discussions on governance-related committees which pertain to librarians. The questions are interrelated, but for convenience they are grouped under several broad topics. The questions are accompanied by comments or by supplementary points to consider.

The range of questions presented is not meant to imply that the nomination and election processes that will eventually be adopted within the Library need to be complicated. Rather, they aim to encourage a thorough discussion of the subject, so that the processes which are developed are fair and comprehensive.

1) Applicable Committees

For what existing committees should procedures be developed?

MAUT-LS Discussion Paper #1 provided a list of governance-related committees which pertain to librarians. The committees listed in Section I of that document ("Governance-Related Committees Filled Within the Library") are the ones for which we must ensure that proper procedures are in place for establishing them and for selecting their members. In some cases, some of these elements are already defined (in whole or in part) by University-level documents such as the *Regulations*; in other cases, these elements operate at the level of the Library. For the ones which operate at the Library level, Library Council needs to determine:

- which ones already have in place procedures which are complete and satisfactory
- which ones have in place procedures which are incomplete and/or unsatisfactory (including procedures which have been designated as one-time exceptions intended to be replaced at a future date)
- which ones lack established procedures

Where procedures are lacking, Library Council needs to fill these gaps. Where procedures are incomplete and/or unsatisfactory, Library Council needs to revise or replace them.

What about future committees created at the University level?

If additional governance-related committees which pertain to librarians are created at the level of the University in the future (for example because of changes to the *Regulations* adopted by Senate), some procedures relating to them may need to be developed within the Library. The specifics will need to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis if this situation ever arises. We should, however, consider in advance the general question of whether Library Council ought to be the governance body through which such cases would be handled.

What about governance-related committees created within the Library itself?

Should such committees have their terms of reference created and approved by Library Council in all cases? Only in some cases? In which cases? By what process? Should any existing governance committees which were created by the Dean (rather than by Library Council) have their terms of reference reconsidered and/or submitted to Library Council for formal approval? Would the Dean be receptive to Library Council putting forward its own proposals for the creation of such committees, or does the Dean consider Library Council's role to be limited to the approval (or even simply the discussion) of committee-creation proposals brought forward by the Dean herself?

2) The Nomination Process

Who should handle the nomination process?

Should nominations be handled by a Nominating Committee mandated by Library Council? If so, how is this committee to be populated in a way that assures fairness and neutrality? Should nominations be handled by members of the Dean's staff who are not librarians, and thus who are in principle impartial because they are ineligible for service on these committees and because their careers are not impacted by the work of these committees?

How is the nomination process announced?

How far ahead of time (before a committee needs to be filled) should the call for nominations go out? Does the nomination process allow sufficient time for candidates to be nominated (especially at times of the year when many librarians are likely to be away at conferences), and for the nominations to be translated into an election ballot? Will all the nominees end up on the ballot? Does the nomination announcement make it clear how the list of nominees will be translated into a list of candidates, to avoid creating a situation in which part of the electoral process gets decided after the nominations have been received? Is the call for nominations sent out by email or in some other way?

Who is eligible to run for which seats?

Are all the committee seats filled by an open nomination and election process? Some of them? None of them? Who gets to decide what seats are filled by appointments made by the Dean? How is the Chair selected? Are the committee terms staggered, and if so how does the staggering affect the nomination process? Who is eligible for nomination? Are there any qualifications prescribed by the *Regulations* (such as having a particular appointment status, for example tenure or a specific rank)? Are there any qualifications (for example having previous committee experience, or belonging to a particular subset of the librarian staff) which are desirable without being mandatory, and if so should they restrict the range of potential candidates?

Who is eligible to make nominations?

Is it appropriate -- and is it even permissible under the *Regulations* -- for members of Library Council who are not librarians to be able to nominate people to committees on which they themselves do not have the right to serve? Is it appropriate to have the Chair or Secretary of Library Council to make nominations?

How are nominations made?

Does the process involve having one person make a nomination, having another person second the nominations, and having the nominee confirm that he or she accepts nomination and

agrees to serve if elected? Is the process handled a) with a series of emails, or b) with a printed mail-in nomination form, or c) at a meeting of Library Council, or d) in some other way?

Regarding the position of the Secretary of Library Council, which is mandated by article 2.4 of the Library Council terms of reference ("The Library Council shall appoint a Secretary of Council"), should the procedure which was used in the summer of 2011 to nominate (and then elect) a Secretary be formally adopted by Library Council for future use? Should the Secretary have a term of office with a defined length, and if so what should it be?

How are the nomination results announced?

In what way does the process differ if the nomination process results in an acclamation, in an election (by electronic ballot, by a mail-in paper ballot, or by a ballot taken at a meeting), or in a combination of both (the acclamation of some nominees and a vote on the others)?

3) The Voting Process

Most of the questions listed in the section on the nomination process also apply to the voting process. One additional point to consider regarding the election process is whether elections are conducted electronically or via a printed mail ballot or via a ballot taken at a meeting. At the University level, various elections conducted by the Secretariat are conducted electronically using the Omnivox voting system (<https://mcgill.omnivox.ca/intr/Module/Identification/Login/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=/intr>). It is also possible to construct an electronic ballot using McGill's LimeSurvey software. A related consideration is the need to ensure the confidentiality of the voting process.

4) Library Council Processes

By what process should Library Council debate the questions raised in this discussion paper and reach decisions about them? The terms of reference of the Library Council (see the appendix below) state that it provides advice and recommendations to the Dean. They also state that it may "develop and adopt rules and regulations for governing its proceedings, including determination of quorum", but on this point Library Council's practices have been vague and uneven. On most occasions, the Dean seeks only a general consensus from Library Council and avoids resorting to formal votes; more rarely, the Dean puts matters to a vote, such as was done during the Library Council meeting of February 6, 2013. At that meeting, the Dean also invoked Robert's Rules regarding quorum. Library Council has never adopted Robert's Rules as its code of parliamentary procedure, nor have Library Council meetings (including the February 6 meeting) ever been conducted according to the detailed and strict procedures prescribed by Robert's Rules.

At one of the first meetings of Library Council, Dean Cook indicated a preference for keeping Library Council's operating procedures informal rather than adopting a defined parliamentary

procedure (for example the Senate Standing Rules of Procedure, which can be consulted here: <http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/standingrules>). There are undoubtedly advantages to operating informally, but this approach must not lead to situations in which the Dean decides from one occasion to the next what rules of procedure will govern a particular meeting of Library Council. There should be more clarity and consistency on this aspect of Library Council's operations, both for reasons of basic fairness and to help ensure that meetings of Library Council run as smoothly as possible.

APPENDIX:

Terms of Reference of the McGill University Library Council

April 5th 2011
McGill University Library Council
Terms of Reference

1. Purpose:

There shall be a Library Council for the purpose of providing a collegial forum to advise the Trenholme Dean or Director of Libraries on matters relating to the role of McGill Libraries in teaching, learning and research, and to the provision of high quality library service.

2. Composition:

2.1 The Library Council shall consist of the Trenholme Dean or Director of Libraries, all persons holding an appointment as a member of the librarian academic staff in the McGill University Libraries, and those persons holding an appointment as Curator, Head of Special Collections, Archivist and Head of Digital Initiatives in the McGill University Libraries.

2.2 Subject to the concurrence of the Dean/Director, the Library Council may appoint additional voting members and/or resource persons with voice but no vote.

2.3 The Trenholme Dean or Director of Libraries shall chair the Library Council. In the absence of the Dean/Director, a member of the Council designated by the Dean/Director shall act as Chair.

2.4 The Library Council shall appoint a Secretary of Council.

3. Mandate and Function:

3.1 The Library Council shall be advisory to the Dean/Director, and, subject to the established governance structure, authority and policy of McGill University, may:

- a) generally provide a collegial setting for discussion of matters tending to enhance the role of the libraries and librarians, such as plans, goals, objectives, service provision, policies and procedures, as may be identified by the Council or referred to it by the Dean/Director or the Provost;
- b) consider and report on matters within the Council's mandate and function, provide advice and make recommendations, as appropriate, to the Dean/Director;
- c) encourage effective communication and consultation within the library system and with the broader university community, as appropriate;
- d) fix the time and place of its meetings, provided that the Library Council shall meet at least three times each year and that the Dean/Director may convene meetings when he or she deems it necessary;
- e) develop and adopt rules and regulations for governing its proceedings, including determination of quorum;
- f) constitute such committees as the Council and Dean/Director jointly may determine to deal with matters within the Council's mandate and function or that are referred to the Council.

3.2 Any recommendation of the Council shall have force only upon approval in accordance with the established governance structure, authority and policy of McGill University, understanding that this usually will mean approval by the Dean/Director.

3.3 Revisions to these terms of reference, as may be proposed from time to time, shall be subject to approval by the Provost.