

3Rs: Retirements, Renewal, and Reinvention in ILL:

How ILL at a Canadian ARL library survived and thrived following the departure of 50% of its staff in six months

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INTRODUCTION

As the baby boomer generation ages, academic libraries in North America are experiencing a significant increase in retirements. Although much of the literature focuses on the impact of the loss of academic librarians, library technicians and staff are equally affected. This poster will explore the impact of the loss in a six-month period of 50% of an ILL workforce on operations, workflow, and morale of the remaining members.

2015: Comprised of 1 librarian, 7 support staff and 1 student casual

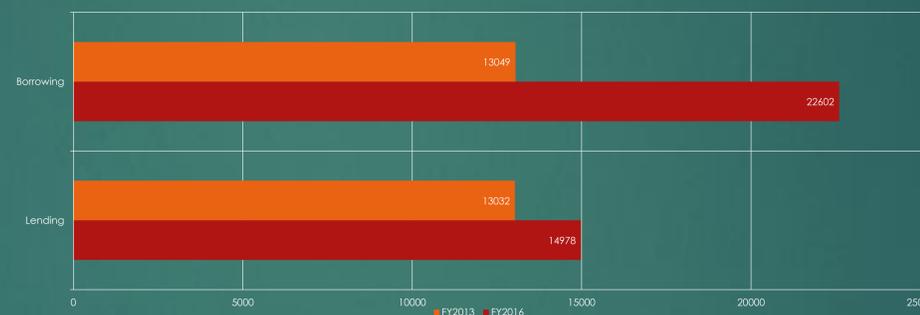
- ▶ 4 borrowing staff
- ▶ 2 lending staff
- ▶ 1 staff in the article scan service for locally owned materials
- ▶ 1 student casual (10-15 hrs.)

2016: ILL lending and borrowing staff numbers reduced by half

- ▶ 1 lending staff member relocated within the library system
- ▶ 2 long-serving borrowing staff members retired

A PERFECT STORM IN AN UNCERTAIN CLIMATE, STAFF NUMBERS DECREASE WHILE NUMBER OF REQUESTS INCREASE

- ▶ The ILL service handles a high volume of requests. In FY2016, nearly 23,000 borrowing, 15,000 lending, and 5,500 article scan requests were received. This does not include on demand book retrieval and deliveries which are handled by the circulation departments of branch libraries.
- ▶ An unprecedented increase in requests received and filled occurred between FY2013 and FY2016: 73% and 52% respectively in borrowing, and 15% and 12% in lending.



- ▶ Result: little time for cross-training of remaining staff prior to the 2016 departures
- ▶ Following departures, workload of remaining staff doubled
- ▶ Hiring freeze was lifted in the fall of 2015, but normal delays in recruitment meant the vacated positions could not be filled immediately
- ▶ Climate of uncertainty created by library mergers and staff departures

HOW WE SURVIVED

We prioritized and redistributed tasks

- ▶ Focused on immediate user needs
- ▶ Created stop-gap measures to meet high request volume

- ▶ Carried out urgent, stop-gap cross-training. Lending and Article Scan staff were cross-trained in targeted tasks, e.g. processing incoming borrows. High-pressure, high-focus environment in which one could be both trainer and trainee in the same day. Mentally and physically demanding.
- ▶ McGill made a lender of last resort
- ▶ Remaining lending staff, and docdel staff person, took on some of the borrowing tasks

HOW WE THRIVED

We stuck together (*esprit de corps*)

- ▶ Staff organized picnics and dinners
- ▶ Group Halloween costume
- ▶ Participated in Tacky Christmas Sweater contest
- ▶ Took pride in work area, decorated for holidays
- ▶ Took breaks in busy times to celebrate birthdays and work anniversaries



Going forward

Now that recruitment has resumed, the team is well prepared to welcome new staff members into its smoother, more streamlined operation.

- ▶ Prior to 2015, individual staff members were the sole holders of knowledge of specific task
- ▶ Now, staff members are cross-trained and have a better understanding of all tasks performed in the department. Since we can all act as back-ups for each other, we work as a real team.

BACKGROUND

The McGill library system underwent a period of major change from 2012 to 2015:

- ▶ Retirement incentive program launched, prompting a wave of departures
- ▶ University-wide hiring freeze in 2014
- ▶ Three faculty libraries merged with larger subject libraries, their holdings relocated to these larger subject libraries and storage
- ▶ Article Scan Service inaugurated in 2014 to improve accessibility to materials relocated in both storage and open collections