

MAUT LIBRARY SECTION

MINUTES OF THE SPRING GENERAL MEETING Thursday, May 4, 2023, 1pm to 3pm In-person in Redpath Conference Room and online via Zoom Approved at MAUT-LS Meeting, November 21, 2023

Welcome and call to order

R. Desmeules (Chair) welcomed members and guests to the MAUT-LS Spring general meeting, and thanked Jo-Anne Watier for her help in setting up the video and audio equipment. A land acknowledgement was read, and members were reminded that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of minute taking and that any questions or comments from members will be anonymized.

1. Approval of agenda

The motion to approve the agenda was moved by S. Hervieux and seconded by A. Kohn. The motion carried and the agenda was approved.

2. Approval of minutes of the MAUT-LS Fall General Meeting, Nov 22, 2022

J. Lange moved to approve the minutes, seconded by D. McKinnon. The motion carried and the minutes were approved.

3. Reports

a. Chair (R. Desmeules)

Chair mentioned that this would be her last meeting as Chair. Since the Fall AGM, there have been a few issues that the executive has brought forward to the Dean. For instance:

1. Ongoing issues at 550 Sherbrooke – the administration for the first time seems supportive of improving working conditions there.
2. Concerns about the merit process – the Dean has called a Library Council meeting specifically to address these concerns, and to speak about salary anomalies. She also would like to speak to Library Cabinet about concerns. During their last meeting with the Dean, she mentioned that she had wanted to try the merit process first (she is used to a unionized environment) to learn more about it before engaging in discussions about it. LS executive has mentioned concerns about merit not being an equitable process, about it not being transparent, and they are cautiously optimistic that the Dean will be open to continuing discussions.
3. Angela Campbell has asked that the work continue on the appendices to the regulations. At Library Council it was announced that the working group had been struck. The role of MAUT-LS in this process is to be advisory and to make sure that librarians' working conditions are respected. There will be an opportunity for LS members to provide feedback on the appendices.

4. There have been some developments with AMPL (the McGill Law professors' union); they are currently working on their first collective agreement. Part of the process is compiling letters of support, and MAUT has submitted a letter of support. They had their first AGM in March. MAUT (and LS) will continue to work with AMPL, as we have similar concerns.
5. D. McKinnon and M. D. Miller will offer another Tenure and Reappointment Information Session in June.

Guidelines for managing MAUT-LS Funds

At our last AGM (Fall 2022), questions arose about how best to spend the funds from the annual dues that had accumulated over the few years where no in-person meetings were held (and thus no money was spent on lunches). In response to the discussion and to the subsequent survey that was sent out to members, LS executive has developed internal guidelines for the managing of MAUT-LS funds.

MAUT-LS will maintain three funding streams: 1) A meeting fund to cover catering for AGMs; the suggested amount to maintain is \$800 per year. 2) A social and professional development fund; this amount will vary year to year and members are encouraged to apply for funds on a first come, first served basis (see guidelines for more details on allocating funds and eligible activities). If the social fund money is not used in a given year, it will carry over to the following year. 3) A savings fund, which should be enough to cover one year of operations. As of March 2023, \$1000 will be kept in reserve as savings.

b. Secretary-Treasurer Report (L. Williams)

There have been a few changes to our membership numbers since our last meeting – we are now at 50 out of 56 eligible academic staff, or around 89%.

Our fund balance at the end of April was \$4,193.87, which reflects an increase of \$920 in membership fees, which we had voted to resume collecting during our Spring 2022 general meeting.

The CIBC account has had just the usual bank charges, so it has been depleted by \$4.50 over the past 6 months. We also withdrew \$40 to cover the cost of snacks for a PIC Brown Bag Lunch event. Our updated balance for the CIBC account is \$209.17. Which brings the total balance for this Spring to \$4,403.04.

A reminder to members, usually our LS section membership fees would be automatically deducted from our pay cheques in October. After voting to not collect fees for a few years during the pandemic, at the Spring 2022 meeting, we voted to resume collecting fees. Then at our Fall 2022 meeting, a motion was passed to waive our section fees for the 2023-2024 academic year. So, no section fees will be charged this October. However, fees for the university wide MAUT still apply.

A member mentioned that MAUT is moving toward an opt-out model rather than an opt-in model, and asked whether this something that LS has considered. The Chair responded that LS has not considered it, and suspects that it might not be appropriate for our section. But it is something we can discuss further.

c. Nominating Committee (D. McKinnon for E. Mackenzie)

Sandy Hervieux will be the incoming Chair of LS, and Sharon Rankin will replace Lauren Williams as Secretary-Treasurer. So, the new executives will be Mary Hague-Yearl as Chair, Robin Desmeules as Past Chair, Sandy Hervieux as Chair-Elect, and Sharon Rankin as Secretary-Treasurer. D. McKinnon thanked everyone who has served and will serve.

Amanda Wheatley and Andrew Miller-Nesbitt will stay on PIC for another year, along with new members Ana Rogers-Butterworth, Tellina Liu, Satya Miller, and Alexandra Kohn.

A member emphasized that service on LS counts as Category 3 on your reappointment and tenure dossiers. D. McKinnon added that the Chair also receives a professional development stipend that does not expire, so that you can use it after you finish your term as Chair.

d. Professional Issues Committee (C. Turp)

C. Turp welcomed new PIC members. PIC recently launched the mentoring program, which will also expand to include some form of skill sharing or job shadowing element. C. Turp thanked everyone who has signed up to be mentors/mentees and encouraged others to join – a call will be sent out in the Fall. PIC also offered a couple of Brown Bag Lunches which were well attended. PIC is also planning two ‘conference round up’ events, so if you’ve attended a conference recently and would like to share, C. Turp encouraged members to sign up on the Intranet page. The most recent writing retreat was not well attended, so PIC has decided to take a break from planning these and will re-think what form in which they could be offered. PIC has also developed a ‘new librarian toolkit,’ which contains useful information for incoming staff – it will be made public soon, most likely on the MAUT website. C. Turp thanked A. Wheatley for spearheading and working on this.

4. Discussion

Topic: New Administration Check in: we have had a full academic year with the new Dean, and several changes to Library Admin. What's working? What needs work? What are we worried about?

A member mentioned that in the first year with a new Dean, they are mainly dealing with the legacy of their predecessor. But the members were happy to see that our new Dean seems eager to address longstanding issues.

Another member asked whether LS keeps a list of ongoing issues of concern, because some of the newer members are not familiar with these issues. A different member suggested that newer members can read the minutes of past LS AGMs, specifically the Chair's report, as these offer concise summaries of ongoing issues. Some issues have included: the merit process and the existence of merit category 7, working conditions in general but recently at 550 Sherbrooke, and pay equity.

A member mentioned that they appreciate that our new Dean seems more interested in transparency than the last, and they hope that this emphasis on transparency will trickle down to other levels of management and governance. However, they had concerns about offering better support to librarians on the tenure track, and how they allocate their time. Librarians should be permitted to do their scholarship and services activities at work, rather than outside of work hours, as is encouraged by some supervisors.

The member also mentioned that individual funds and PD (professional development allowance) funds allotted to librarians are no longer sufficient to cover attendance at conferences. Despite inflation, these amounts have not increased in years, and as a result librarians (who are required to attend conferences for their jobs, to count toward reappointment and tenure) are having to pay out-of-pocket in order to cover conference expenses, which most cannot afford to do. Another member mentioned that the Continuing Education Committee is bringing this issue to the Dean, as the committee has been receiving applications to cover conference expenses, even though these expenses are beyond the purview of the committee and are meant to be covered by individual or PD funds.

Another member brought forward concerns about librarian workspaces, both at 550 and with the closure of HSSL looming, that there are no plans in place about where we will go or what our interim workspaces will look like. The member also mentioned concern that after the VP of Academic Affairs position was abolished, we have had no one to go to for information about sabbaticals, reappointment, tenure, and so on. Most supervisors are not in a position to provide this ongoing guidance and information to staff. If the new Dean does not plan to fill this position, there needs to be a better way for staff to find definitive information or documentation on these subjects. Otherwise, we waste days or weeks tracking down information which is often conflicting from multiple sources.

P. Grutter suggested that LS should conduct a survey of how many librarians use 100% of their individual and PD funds each year, in order to show the need for an increase in the amount. He explained that most profs at McGill don't use *any* of their PD funds, because their grant funds can cover conference attendance, and so they can't argue for an increase in the allotment for these funds. But if librarians can demonstrate the need, they could argue for an increase. He suggested doing a survey over the last 5 years, in order to show usage of funds before the pandemic. The chair agreed that LS executive will conduct this survey.

A member mentioned that because individual funds can only be used for travel, conferences, or continuing education, those who cannot travel due to disabilities are not able to use the funds, and the money is lost. This could explain why not every librarian spends their entire fund. The member wondered whether these funds could be used for research instead, since we do not have any funds allotted for this purpose. It is possible to use PD funds for research, but not individual funds. Because librarians do not have access to research grants, the member would like the administration to consider allowing the use of individual funds for research projects.

Another member suggested bringing these fund questions forward at the next Library Council meeting or at the next breakfast or tea with the Dean.

A member mentioned wanting to also examine what admin funds can be spent on. There are, for instance, expensive conferences that staff have to attend as part of their jobs. But when individual and PD funds are not enough to cover the cost, they are told that they cannot use admin funds (which otherwise might not even be spent) to cover the difference. There needs to be greater clarity on the amounts available in these funds, what they can be used for, and so forth.

Another member expressed that they are glad the library has brought up discussions and awareness around mental health, but worried that the administration will consider this issue dealt with and ‘checked off the list.’ They encouraged LS executive to continue to bring this issue forward as it will never be ‘solved’ per se. Questions that could be brought to management include, for instance, the use of sick days to manage mental health. There is burnout throughout the library system, so it is clear there is a problem, and we need solutions that are better than superficial lip service.

Another member mentioned that librarians on the tenure track do not have the luxury of self-care. Other members suggested that anyone feeling a mental health struggle should take sick days, and that members of the reappointment or tenure committees do not have access to this information.

A member expressed that due to the upcoming Fiat Lux move, and the massive amount of preparatory work involved, they have been advised by their supervisor to not take on extra work like chairing committees, doing research, or going to conferences. They are concerned that this will negatively affect both merit rankings and tenure consideration. They would like to make sure that the Dean is aware that staff are being given these instructions, so that this can be taken into consideration during merit and tenure exercises. Many other members voiced similar concerns.

Other members echoed concerns about the move, and about how these shifting priorities mean that it will be much harder to do their jobs in general. Others draw the connection between the importance of mental health and the stress of the move.

Another member mentioned that we have had discussions at past AGMs about toxic work environments, bullying, and other issues, and that they do not want these concerns to fall

by the wayside. The member suggested that these issues should be brought into staff mental health discussions.

LS executive has decided not to provide a full account of the next section of the discussion, in order to fully protect the privacy of the staff members who spoke. In summary, the discussion revolved around feelings of high stress, low morale, mental health struggles, a lack of transparency, and a toxic work environment in the library.

A member suggested that the group should read the allocation of duties clause of the librarian regulations, because it lays out duties that librarians should and should not be doing, and how exactly they are allocated. Duties cannot be allocated in wildly different ways to different staff. So, if a staff member finds that their duties are being allocated in a discriminatory way, especially if it is stopping them from fulfilling the three required areas of their academic duties, they could make a grievance.

Another member suggested that unfortunately if you are on the tenure track and already very stressed out, you would be worried about losing your job if you file a grievance. A second member mentioned that because supervisors are given so much leeway, they have many ways of pressuring staff into taking on unfair duties, or of forcing staff to perform work outside of work hours – whether through threats or through punishment with low merit.

A member emphasized that to take the onus from the affected staff members, this should be an issue for the LS executive to take on, and to bring these concerns to the Dean. The Chair agreed.

Another member mentioned that they have been told not to do so much research and service if they are going to get through the move, or they can work on weekends. Even though this member feels secure in their job, they are not comfortable countering these kinds of directives from management. They end up (like others) hiding their research activities from their supervisors.

A member observed that McGill librarians have a reputation (among other Canadian libraries) of being super competitive, hyper productive, and so forth. None of this is in our regulations. There are administrators and supervisors who enforce this culture, but we are also the ones who have accepted it, and who take on so much more than other librarians. Maybe we need to have a conversation amongst ourselves to examine why things are the way they are, and how we can change them. Merit is one way that we are held to this unrealistically high standard, but how can we push back against that?

Another member mentioned that there is a huge tension between merit and reappointment/tenure. The things that we need to do in order to develop a full dossier are often in conflict with the tasks we imagine we need to focus on in order to do well in merit. But they say ‘imagine,’ because ultimately, we have no idea. We do not know what we need to do in order to get a good merit ranking. Some people receive a Category 1 merit award when they have done very little research and service. Others do amazing

research and service and do not get this category. We need better transparency on how our activities are graded during the merit process. We also need a better feedback system so that our supervisors can tell us, ‘Here’s what you need to do in order to get a 1 next year.’”

The Chair mentioned that in the most recent meeting with the Dean, LS had asked for more transparency in the process. The Dean said that she would bring the issue to Library Cabinet.

A member mentioned that even just the process of writing and submitting our APRs is incredibly onerous, compared to other faculty at McGill. Another member reiterated that it is problematic that we are evaluated for merit in the same way that professors are, when our jobs are so different, and that we work full-time jobs and still have the same research and service expectations. A third member echoed these concerns, but also said that they do not want this discussion to end up with abolishing tenure for librarians.

A member mentioned that we receive comments from our supervisor before we submit our dossiers, but we do not receive any comments after we get our rankings. It would be helpful if we could put a system in place for this constructive feedback.

Members expressed disappointment that when MAUT conducted a university-wide survey about merit, the library was not included. P. Grutter mentioned that this survey could still be sent to our current Dean.

A member explained that merit is tricky, because even if we had clear guidelines about how to get Category 1, and we all met those guidelines, we still would not all get Category 1, because the Assoc. Deans are not permitted (or do not have the funds) to give everyone Category 1. Which makes the process fundamentally unfair. The process needs to be reconsidered at a higher level by MAUT.

P. Grutter offered to attend any future meetings about merit with the Dean and LS.

A member said that while it is great that we are comfortable to discuss these issues amongst ourselves, members should be aware that when some of us have asked for feedback on the merit process, we have been punished in clear ways. We need to establish trust with the current administration to ensure that any future discussions will not result in any kind of retaliation.

5. **Other Business**

No other business was brought forward.

6. **Adjournment**

S. Hervieux moves to adjourn the meeting, seconded by D. McKinnon.