



SURVEY OF MCLL MODERATOR ENGAGEMENT

Report to the MCLL Council

Abstract: In December 2019, Council requested that the Planning Committee create and administer a survey of moderators to inquire about their engagement in the MCLL community in the service of retaining and recruiting moderators. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the high-priority burden the pandemic put on various committees, the survey was delayed until late in the Fall 2020 term. This document reports on the survey results and includes, in appendices, the survey questions as well as the detailed results including all comments received by respondents.

Submitted by the Planning Committee
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Version history

Version 2	2021-02-08	Updated to add gender and age data for moderators compared to overall MCLL population. See sections 4.1.3 and 4.1.4 on page 7.
Version 1	2021-01-08	Original report submitted to MCLL Council

1. Executive summary

In December 2019, Council requested that the Planning Committee create and administer a survey of moderators to inquire about their engagement in the MCLL community for the purpose of retaining and recruiting moderators. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the high-priority burden the pandemic put on various committees, the survey was delayed until late in the Fall 2020 term. This document reports on the survey results and includes, in an appendix, the detailed results including all comments written by respondents. The Planning Committee notes that the survey results, as a current snapshot, could serve as a baseline and recommends that this type of survey be repeated regularly, perhaps every three to five years.

Of the 188 surveys sent, 42 surveys (22%) were completed and successfully submitted. The survey included 19 questions divided among three types: six quantitative questions, nine questions that elicited comment-type answers, and three that elicited short text responses. Questions were designed to capture basic information about how active the respondents have been as moderators and the types of Study Groups (SG) they offer. Other questions address how they experience

moderating remotely, via Zoom. Findings show some strong trends in spite of often quite varied responses, as described in the next sections.

As the survey findings have implications for more than one MCLL committee, this report is submitted to Council for its review and discussion in anticipation that Council will then provide direction to the relevant committees regarding follow-up actions.

2. Result highlights

Findings include information about how active the respondents have been as moderators, the types of Study Groups (SG) they offer, how they experience moderating remote SGs via Zoom, how they experience moderating in general, and what they would recommend to encourage other members to moderate.

- About half the respondents were female, half male; about 66% were between 65 and 84 years of age.
- 81% of respondents have been moderating from two years to more than five years.
- 60% moderate from one to three times a year.
- Of the most frequent types of SGs offered by the respondents, “moderator participant presentation group” and “moderator presentation group” both ranked at approximately 20% each.
- About 30% of respondents have expertise in the humanities, followed by social sciences and business/commerce.
- Regarding moderating online, about 33% of respondents feel competent using Zoom, and another 16% recommend more Zoom training and support. Respondents reported receiving technical help and support from their Curriculum Committee liaison person as the most frequent types of support received; 38% reported linking with their liaison. Of those moderators who have discontinued, seven have done so because of the online format; at least one-third reported needing no encouragement to continue moderating.
- Most respondents participate in MCLL by attending SGs and/or workshops; nearly a third serve or have served on Committees and/or Council.
- To recruit new moderators, respondents recommended, direct recruiting, promoting co-moderating as an option, and offering more technical (Zoom) training and support.

3. About the survey and how it was administered

The survey link was sent on November 19, 2020 to all 188 members on the moderator list maintained by the Curriculum Committee. This includes members who have moderated at least one Study Group in the past five years. Members were allowed approximately two weeks to respond, until December 4, with a reminder sent after one week. In total, 42 surveys were completed, a response rate of 22%, which is considered an average rate in social science research.

Survey questions were designed to capture basic information about the moderators (age, gender), how active the respondents have been as moderators, the types of Study Groups (SG) they offer,

how they experience moderating remote SGs via Zoom, and their recommendations for recruiting other members to moderate. The survey has 19 questions, as follows:

- Six single-choice questions; the results are reported in a simple breakdown of how many respondents selected each option for the question.
- Nine questions elicit comment-type answers. Responses to these have been grouped into categories that identify patterns.
- Three questions that require a short text response. Responses to these have been grouped into categories as well.

4. Detailed results

Results were reported by means of a query of the Lime¹ survey tool; both complete results and results that included all incomplete attempts (categorized as "Not completed or Not displayed").² This report addresses the 42 complete results only.

The results query returned quantitative results for all multiple-choice questions and listed all the comments and short-text responses for each question of that type. All comments and text responses were analyzed to identify commonalities among responses as follows: four “teams” of two people each (three members of the Planning Committee and one member of the Moderator Subcommittee divided the comment-type questions among the four teams. The two people on each team independently reviewed and grouped the comments. The two independently-achieved groupings were then compared and harmonized for each comment response, resulting in robust categories for analysis.

4.1. Characteristics of the respondents

A few multiple-choice questions capture some basic information, such as age and gender, plus information about how active the respondents have been as moderators and the types of Study Groups (SG) they offer. Other questions capture how they experience moderating remotely, via Zoom.

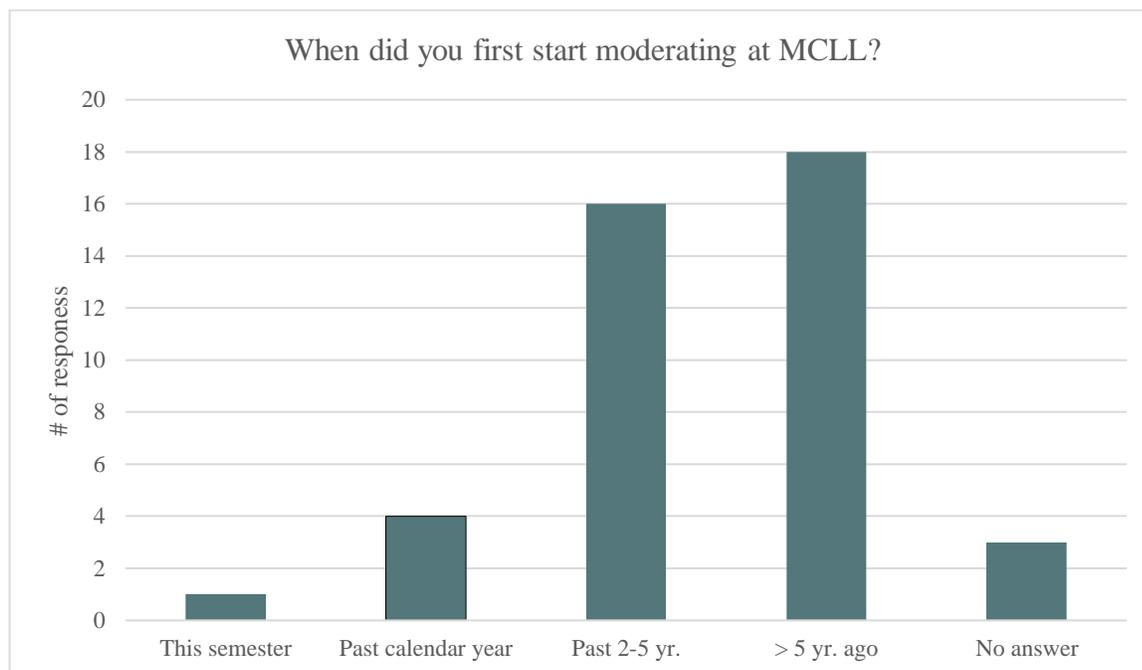
4.1.1. Length of service

Of the 42 respondents to [Question 1](#), nearly 81% have been moderating from two years to more than five years: nearly 43% for more than five years and 38% for two to five years. Three

¹ For more information about the Lime survey tool, see <https://www.limesurvey.org/>.

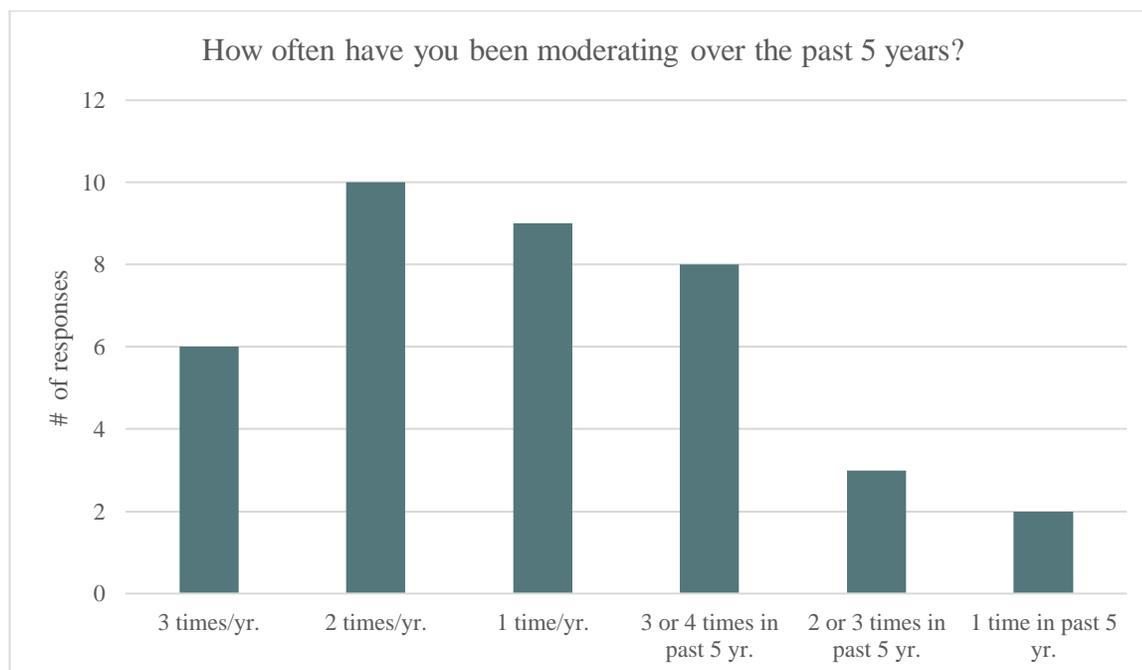
² 84 total attempts were recorded for the survey; however, 42 of these were discarded as “not completed” or “not displayed.” Incomplete responses are caused when a respondent opens and closes a survey page or exits the survey and does not save or submit the results. We cannot know the proportion of incomplete responses due to multiple individuals opening and closing the survey once or to a single person opening and closing the survey more than once. This report is based on the 42 completed/submitted surveys.

respondents selected “No answer,” which is the Lime tool mandatory default option in this question type.



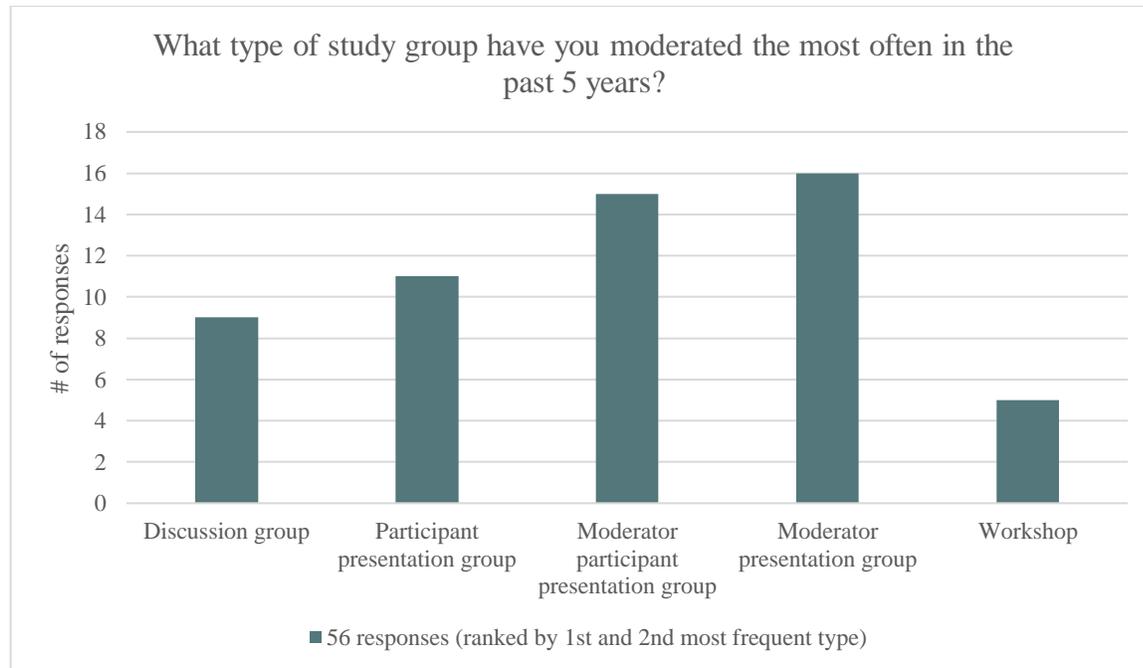
4.1.2. Frequency of moderating

Of the 42 respondents to [Question 2](#), an impressive 60% moderate from one to three times a year. (Four respondents selected “No answer,” which is the mandatory default in this question type.)



4.1.1. Type of Study Group

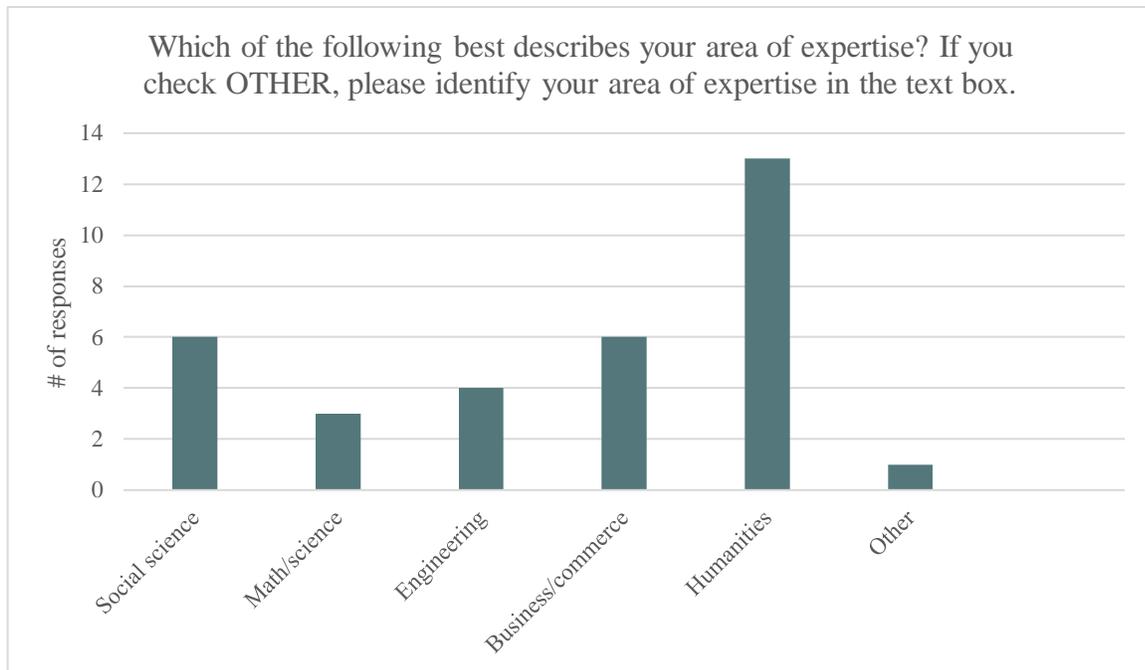
Question 3 asked respondents to rank both their first and second most frequent type of SG. A total of 56 responses were received. Both “**moderator participant presentation group**” and “**moderator presentation group**” received the highest rankings.



4.1.2. Expertise and interest

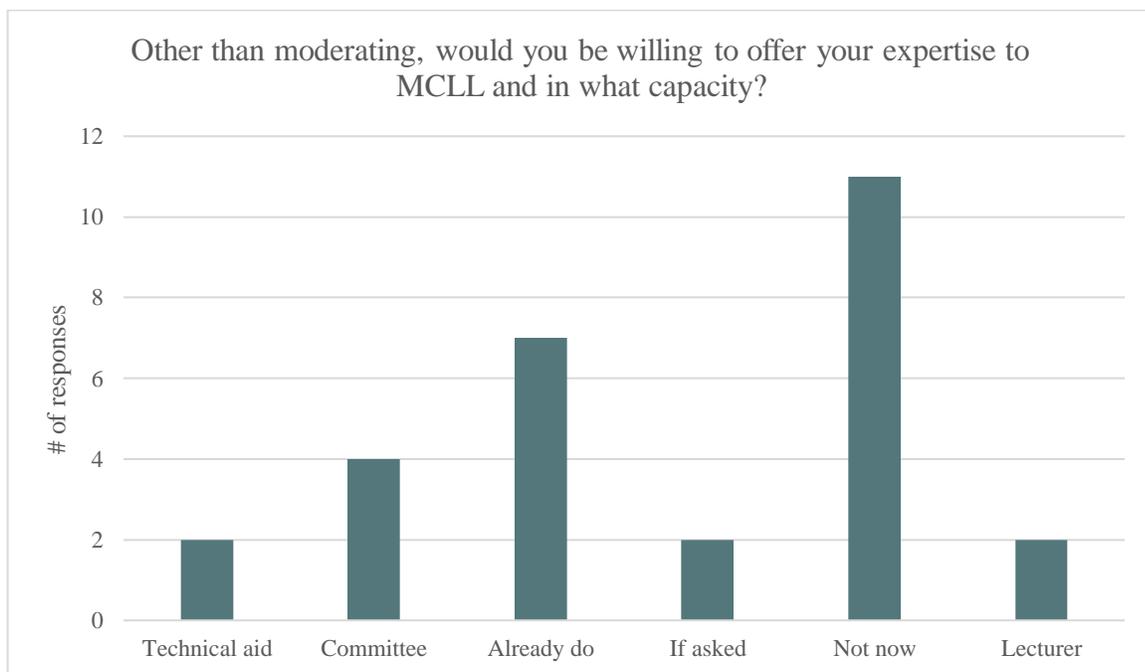
Question 16 sought to characterize the expertise of our moderators. In retrospect, this question should have been asked as two, about areas of interest as well as expertise, as some, if not many, members moderate SGs in whose topic they have no particular expertise but have genuine interest.³ The 36 responses were grouped as follows:

³ One respondent commented, “One positive aspect of MCLL is that people who worked all their lives in a certain field, become interested in something completely different when they retire, and may offer lectures or study groups in that field. Also, we are told that one does not need to be an expert on a topic in order to moderate a SG on it - moderators and participants both do research and we all learn from each other’s work. So this question is not all that relevant in my opinion.”



Six respondents chose OTHER, but of those five provided comments that fit into the categories already available in the question itself (and shown in the chart above). For example, one selected OTHER but included Literature in the comment, another included History; these were both categorized as Humanities.

Question 17 asked if respondents would be willing to offer their expertise to MCLL and in what capacity. 28 moderators responded, as follows:



4.1.3. Gender

Question 14 determined the gender breakdown of the respondents, which was nearly evenly divided between male and female.

- Male = 19
- Female = 18
- No answer = 5

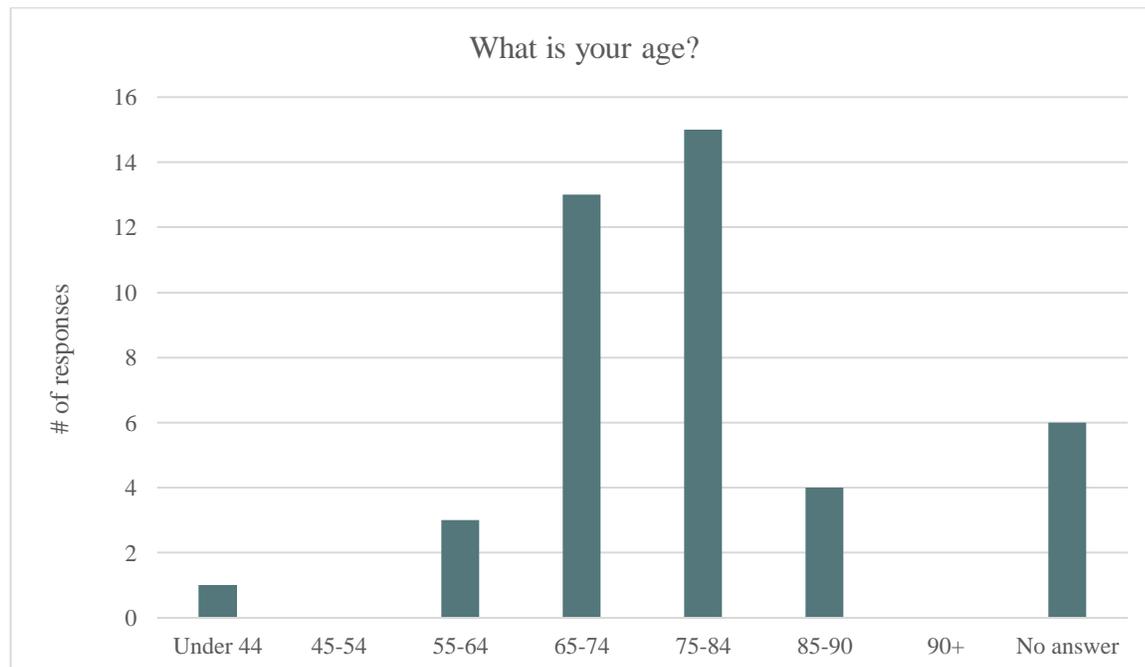
In the total MCLL membership, the breakdown is about 70% female and 30% male, so this finding indicates that women are under-represented as moderators in our sample. Also, if we look beyond our survey at the list of all moderators in the past five years, we see the same breakdown: about half are female, half male. We seem to have an underutilized pool of potential moderators among female members.

4.1.4. Age

Question 15 queried elicited an age distribution. Of the 36 responses, their age distribution more or less reflects that of our overall membership: 28 were between 65 to 84 years old.

- 36% were between 65 and 74 years of age versus 40% of all members
- 42% were 75-84 versus 35% of all members
- 11% were 85-90 (bravo!) versus 10% of all members

We do see more representation of moderators aged 75-85 than we would expect compared to the overall membership in that age group. We seem to have a somewhat underutilized pool of potential moderators among younger members. To recruit new moderators, several respondents recommended more strongly promoting *co-moderating* as an option.



4.2. Support for moderators

The next set of questions addressed the support that moderators receive and would like from MCLL.

- 38 responses were received to [Question 4](#), “What **type of support** have you received as a moderator from MCLL?” They were categorized into the following groups, ordered by the most frequent category to the least.

Support type category	# of responses
Chair of Curriculum Committee (rather than liaison person)	12
Liaison person	4
General technical (“excellent” and “Martin Coles”)	10
Technical (Zoom) host for my SG	5
Office and admin staff (before Zoom)	7
Workshops, survey results, members’ forum	3
No support needed	2
Financial support (for opera study group + access to DVDs, PCs)	1

- 41 responses were received to [Question 8](#), “Have you linked with your Curriculum Committee liaison for support as a moderator?”
 - Yes = 16 responses
 - No = 18 responses

It’s important to note that of the 16 moderators who answered YES to this question, in the preceding question (#4), 12 of the 16 reported contacting the chair of the Curriculum Committee directly rather than their liaison person.

- The follow-up [Question 9](#) elicited 17 responses: “If yes, was the Curriculum Committee liaison support person helpful?”
 - Yes or positive comment = 12 responses
 - No = 2 responses
 - Not relevant, for example, “I need a host for my next study group” = 3

4.3. Impact of switch to an online platform

The next three questions addressed moderating online (over Zoom) rather than in person. All responses were received as comments and similar comments were organized into groups.

- 36 responses were received to [Question 5](#), “How has the switch to an online platform at MCLL affected your willingness or your ability to be a moderator?”, as follows:
 - Is okay, good, or easier (have more focus and improved skills) = 19 responses

- Reticence to do online = 11 responses (possibly 12 because one comment is difficult to understand as a clear yes or no)
- 35 responses were received to **Question 6** “Did you know that MCLL has added Zoom training and Zoom technical support to help moderators during their online study groups?”
 - Yes = 30 responses
 - No = 5 responses
- 34 responses were received to **Question 7**, “What type of support and encouragement would you additionally like to receive from MCLL to support you as a moderator at MCLL, especially in light of the move to an online platform?”

Type of support wanted	# of responses
None needed; feel competent using Zoom	8
More hands-on training for Zoom/practice/Zoom updates, especially at beginning of session	5
Hosts = 3 (in-class tech for equipment issues)	3
Better equipment at home	2
Not interested in Zoom/online format	2
Encouragement/ a bit of handholding	2
Zoom hotline	1
Acquisition of 2-3 software licences for digital tools used in workshop	1
Meetings on best practices, specific moderators’ experiences (<i>note that this is already in practice</i>)	1
Access to high-speed internet for the moderator	1
Want to learn how to host	1
Hosts should turn off video of members with distracting behavior	1

4.4. Moderator engagement

A series of questions (#10-13) probed moderator engagement in MCLL.

The first, **Question 10**, is a very indirect measure of engagement: “Have you been able to record attendance in your MCLL study group on a regular basis? If NO or SOMETIMES, please explain in the comments box. Of the 29 responses, 24 (30%) were YES, 4 were NO, and 1 was SOMETIMES. The comments indicated considerable inconsistency across respondents and, in the online format, sometimes unawareness that the technical hosts can use Zoom to automatically take attendance. The comments are grouped as follows:

Comment categories	# of responses
Zoom host has taken care of this (it’s easier online)	9

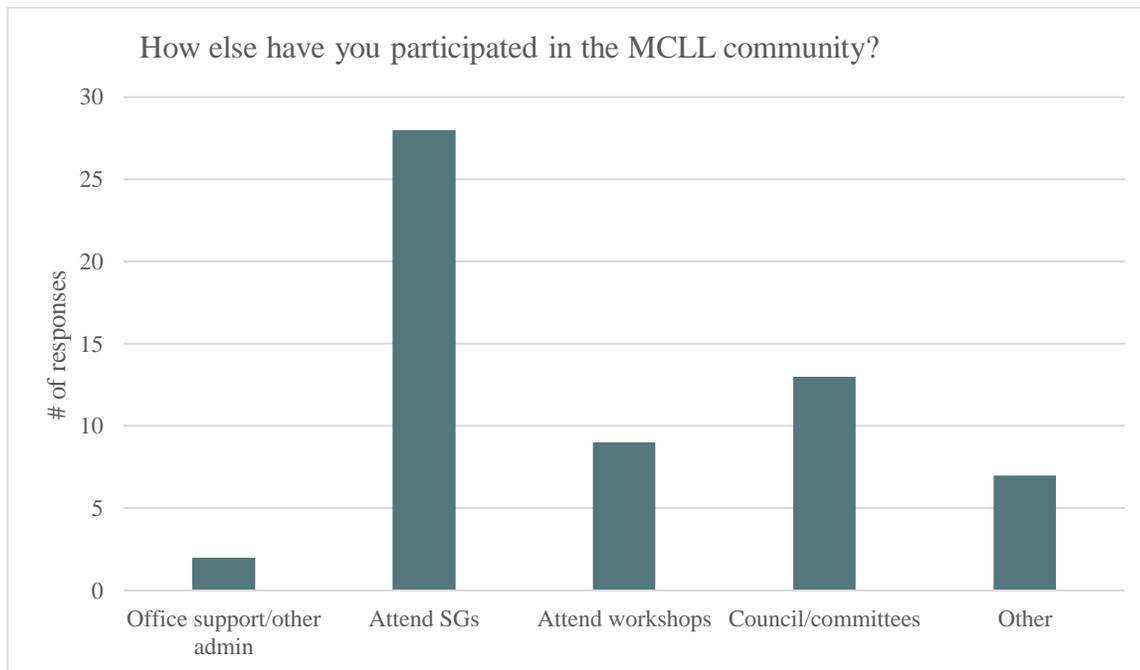
Difficult to take attendance online (<i>Note: The Zoom host can/should do this</i>)	1
In the past attendance was sometimes taken	3
In the past attendance was taken regularly	2
By visual verification	1
Haven't done Zoom classes	1

One comment addressed an entirely different but interesting topic, about the trade-off between large Zoom SGs (higher revenue potential) but less intimacy and interaction. For the full comment (ID 53), see [Appendix 2: Detailed results](#).

The next questions (11, 12, and 13) directly probed moderator engagement, as follows:

4.4.1. How else do moderators participate in MCLL?

Question 11 provided multiple-choice options and asked for comments if “Other” was selected. Moderators could choose as many answers as applied. Of the 42 responses, 28 moderators (66%) also attend SGs, and 13 (30%) participate in committees or serve on Council.



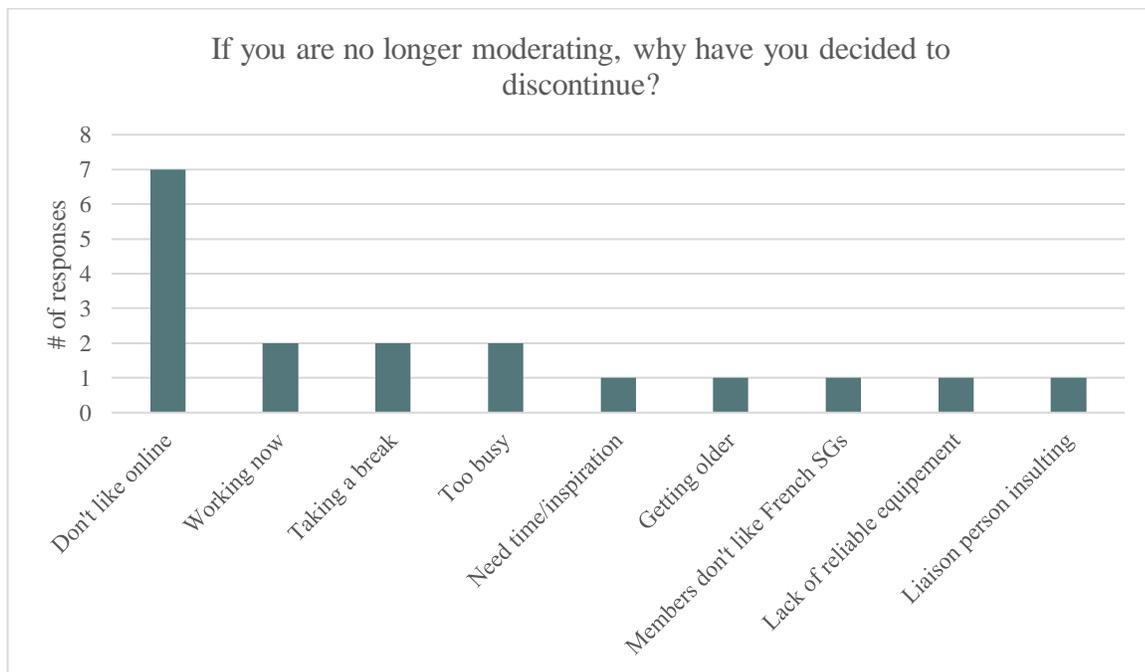
The five comments associated with the “Other” option are as follows:

Comment categories	Number of responses
Help with registration	1
Fundraising	1
Zoom hosting	1

Attending lectures	1
Dinner parties at my home (for class)	1

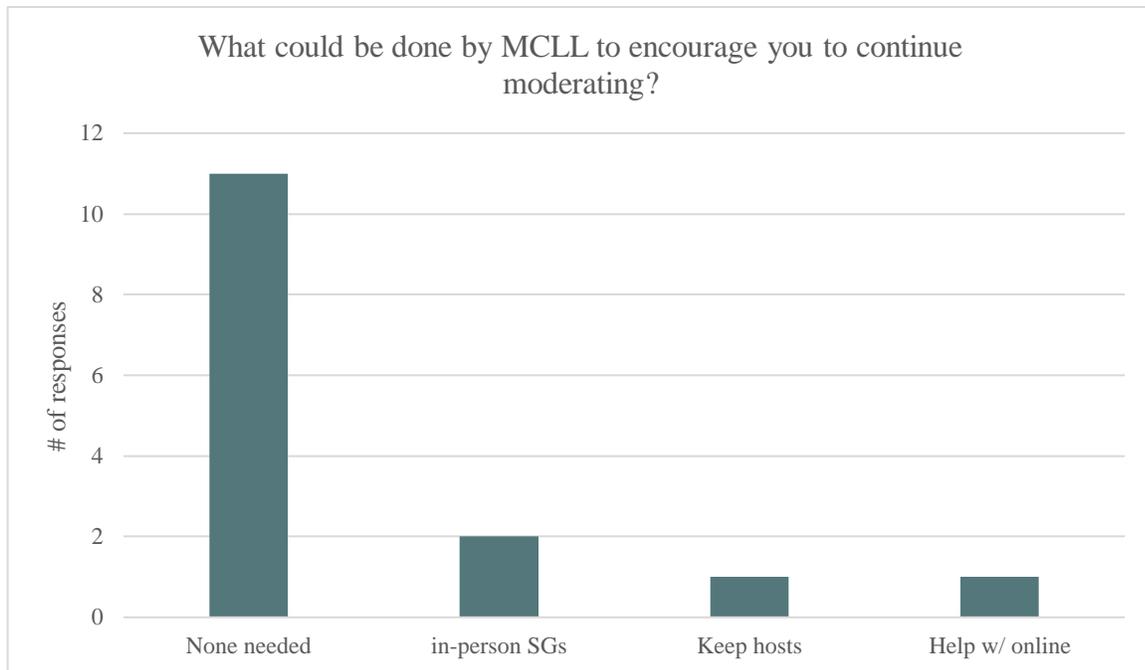
4.4.2. No longer moderating

Question 12 asked moderators who have discontinued moderating why they have stopped. 23 provided comment-type responses. Of these, six reported that they do not like moderating online. Note that the responses to Question 5, “How has the switch to an online platform at MCLL affected your willingness or your ability to be a moderator?” address this question explicitly in terms of online moderating. Eleven of those responses indicated that the online format has caused them to stop moderating, at least temporarily.



4.4.3. How to encourage moderators to continue

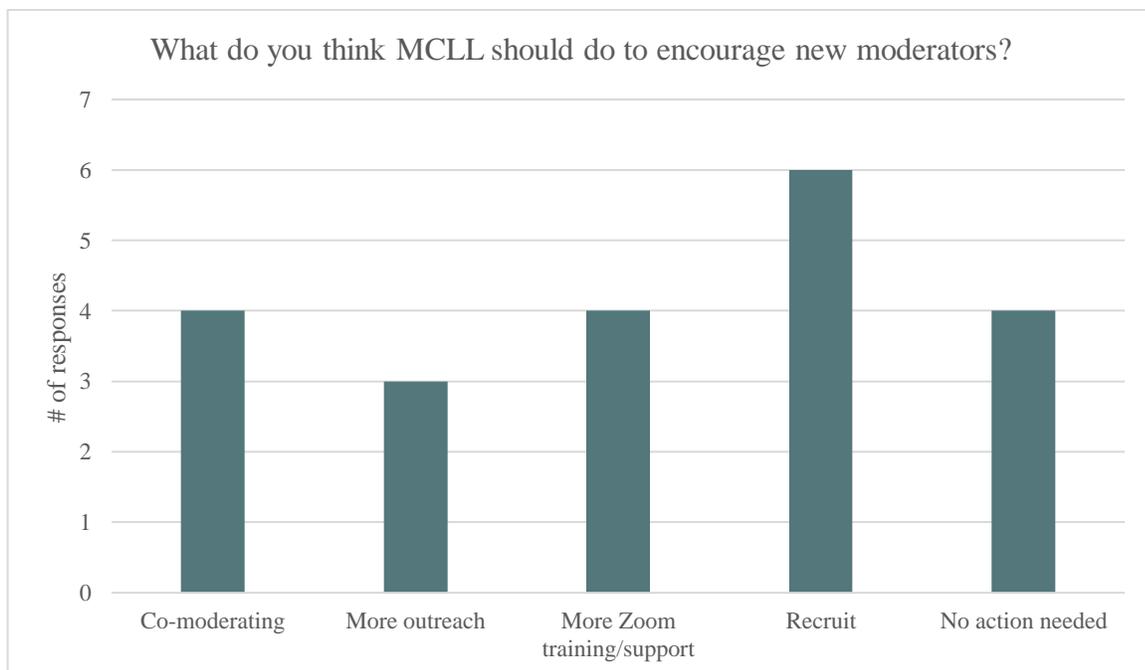
Question 13 asked moderators what MCCL could do to encourage them to continue moderating. 29 responses were grouped as follows, of which 11 responded that no encouragement was needed as they had good support:



4.5. How to get new moderators and members on board

Two questions asked for suggestions to encourage (recruit) new moderators and new members.

[Question 18](#) addressed what MCLL could do to encourage members to become new moderators. Of the 27 responses, the 21 most substantive were categorized as follows. Included in the “Recruit” category were suggestions to recruit new members, former teachers, retiring university professors, and younger members (not seniors).



Question 19 addressed what MCLL could do to recruit members. Again, there were 27 responses, and of these, 12 recommended more advertising, including publicizing by word of mouth. Related to this were several one-of responses suggesting expanding our geographic scope, networking with other community groups, recruiting McGill faculty, recruiting homebound seniors for online activities, and making MCLL multi-generational.

5. Next steps

Moderators are key to the mission and functioning of MCLL. Because the survey findings have different implications for different MCLL committees, this report is submitted to Council for review and discussion so that Council can then distribute it to the relevant committees and give direction regarding recommendations and follow-up activities.

6. Appendix 1: Survey questions

1. When did you first start moderating at MCLL? Choose one of the following answers:
 - This semester
 - Over the past calendar year from September 2019 to August 2020
 - In the past 2-5 years
 - More than 5 years ago
 - No answer

[back to report text](#)
2. How often have you been moderating over the past 5 years? Choose one of the following answers:
 - Three times a year
 - Two times a year
 - One time a year
 - Three or four times in the past 5 years
 - Two to three times in the last five years
 - One time in the past 5 years
 - No answer

[back to report text](#)
3. What type of study group have you moderated the most often in the past 5 years? Rank your first and second most frequent type of study group. Check all that apply:
 - Discussion group
 - Participant presentation group
 - Moderator participant presentation group
 - Moderator presentation group
 - Workshop

[back to report text](#)
4. What type of support have you received as a moderator from MCLL? [back to report text](#)
5. How has the switch to an online platform at MCLL affected your willingness or your ability to be a moderator? [back to report text](#)
6. Did you know that MCLL has added Zoom training and zoom technical support to help moderators during their online study groups? Choose one of the following answers:
 - Yes
 - No
 - No answer

[back to report text](#)

-
7. What type of support and encouragement would you additionally like to receive from MCLL to support you as a moderator at MCLL, especially in light of the move to an online platform?
[back to report text](#)
8. Have you linked with your Curriculum Committee liaison for support as a moderator? Choose one of the following answers
- Yes
 - No
 - No answer
- [back to report text](#)
9. If yes, was the Curriculum Committee liaison support person helpful? [back to report text](#)
10. Have you been able to record attendance in your MCLL study group on a regular basis? If NO or SOMETIMES, please explain in the comments box. Choose one of the following answers:
- Yes
 - No: please enter your comment here
 - Sometimes: please enter your comment here
 - No answer
- [back to report text](#)
11. Excluding moderating how else have you participated in the MCLL community. Choose as many answers as apply. If you choose OTHER, please provide details in the comments box. Check all that apply.
- Office support or other administrative duties
 - Attending study groups
 - Attending workshops
 - Participating in MCLL Council or committees
 - Other: please enter your comment here
- [back to report text](#)
12. If you are no longer moderating, why have you decided to discontinue? [back to report text](#)
13. What could be done by MCLL to encourage you to continue moderating? [back to report text](#)
14. What is your gender? Choose one of the following answers:
- Male
 - Female
 - Prefer not to answer
 - No answer
- [back to report text](#)
15. What is your age? Choose one of the following answers:
- Under 44
 - 45 to 54
 - 55 to 64
 - 65 to 74
 - 75 to 84
 - 85 to 90 90+
 - No answer

[back to report text](#)

16. Which of the following best describes your area of expertise? If you check OTHER, please identify your area of expertise in the text box below. Choose one of the following answers

- Social sciences
- Math and Sciences
- Engineering
Business / Commerce
- Humanities
- Other: please enter your comment here
- No answer

[back to report text](#)

17. Other than moderating, would you be willing to offer your expertise to MCLL and in what capacity? [back to report text](#)

18. What do you think MCLL should do to encourage new moderators? [back to report text](#)

19. What do you think MCLL should do to encourage new members? [back to report text](#)