

Research Commons Task Force Report

March 31, 2011

Elaine Fairey, Task Force Chair

The SFU Library’s Research Commons will embody SFU’s articulated strengths – student-centred, research-driven, and community-engaged – by providing programs, services and spaces to support SFU graduate students and other researchers at all stages of the research process. It will be physically located in the Bennett Library at SFU Burnaby, reaching all campuses, and beyond, through virtual programs, services and connections, and it will serve as the inspiration for similar locations to be considered for SFU Vancouver and SFU Surrey.

In order to respond to the actual and evolving needs of its graduate student and other audiences, Research Commons programs, services, and spaces are intended to be flexible, mobile, and modular. Ongoing assessment of their effectiveness will be a key component in both initial and future planning and development of the Research Commons.

Task Force Web Page

<http://staff.lib.sfu.ca/library-wide-reports/planning/space/research-commons-task-force>

Contents

Task Force Charge	2
Membership.....	2
Background	3
Process	3
Findings	3
Principles.....	3
Recommendations	4
<i>Programs</i>	4
<i>Services</i>	5
Spaces (including furniture and technology)	5
Follow up required:.....	6
Appendix I	8
Appendix II	21
Appendix III (attachment)	

Task Force Charge

Identify programmatic requirements of a Research Commons suite of services to be sited on Bennett second floor:

1. Recommend an array of services to build, extend or relocate to the Research Common. Consider:
 - a. Data, GIS, and related data services;
 - b. Existing Library services tailored to advanced research needs (e.g., how to start your own journal using OJS);
 - c. Gaps in existing SLC services (or expansion of same) that would fit with advanced research needs;
 - d. Existing or past campus-based services (statistical consulting, grant-writing/application, etc.)
2. Identify the space requirements of a Research Commons:
 - a. Graduate Student individual workspaces (explore REM model, consider elimination or modification of 5th floor carrels)
 - b. Instruction space(s)
 - c. Thesis advisory function
 - d. Group study rooms
 - e. Consultation space(s)

The Task Force will consult broadly with SFU Library and community experts and stakeholders, including the Dean of Graduate Studies, graduate students and heads of the Surrey and Belzberg Libraries. The Task Force will also coordinate with the Bennett Third Floor Renewal Task Force.

In its deliberations, the Task Force should assume that the existing second floor Sorting Room and Building & Equipment Services Room can if necessary be repurposed for RC needs. If either/both are recommended, Library Administration will review the recommendation. If a staff move is approved, affected staff will be fully engaged in all aspects of space planning for the required new staff space(s). The Task Force should also assume there are no unreasonable funding constraints on the ideal configuration of the Research Commons.

Report Due Date: March 31, 2011

Membership

Elaine Fairey (chair) - Assoc. UL for Bennett Public Services and Dir., Student Learning Commons

Gwen Bird - Assoc. UL for Collection Management

Matthew Brolich - Graduate student - SLC Grad Facilitator

Sarah Chown - Graduate student - Professional Development Coordinator, Graduate Student Society

Carla Graebner - Liaison Librarian for Archaeology, Economics, and Government Information

Renee McCallum - Writing Services Coordinator, Student Learning Commons

Walter Piovesan - Librarian for Maps, Data, GIS and Liaison Librarian for Statistics & Actuarial Sciences

Joan Wolfe - Thesis Assistant

Baharak Yousefi- Liaison Librarian for Education and Political Science

Background

Responding to the changing research environment, including new space and service possibilities created by the print to digital transformation of information creation and distribution, North American university libraries are increasingly seeking to support the advanced research needs of students through renovating spaces and re-focusing services. These initiatives have been implemented in various fashions, generally using the program concept of a “Graduate Commons,” “Research Commons” or “Knowledge Commons”. The Research Commons Task Force explored the needs and program elements for an SFU Library-based Research Commons in order to deliver unified recommendations to the Library Administration.

Process

The Task Force met biweekly during February and March. Tasks included reviewing relevant literature and related initiatives at other institutions, touring Library and campus spaces, seeking informal but structured input from a variety of stakeholders, defining foundational principles for the RC, and organizing findings and conclusions according to these principles.

Findings

Graduate student requirements vary according to discipline and depending on the supports provided by their individual advisors and/or departments. There were a number of common requests, however, including: collaborative space, individual space, lockable space; data and statistical support services; and writing support.

Faculty and others were particularly interested in the Research Commons providing spaces and technology to facilitate collaboration and presentations across campuses and beyond.

The recently-launched Research Commons at the University of Washington Libraries provided much useful and thought-provoking information, including the planning documents and floor plans published on its web site at <http://commons.lib.washington.edu/>, and an in-depth telephone conversation with Lauren Ray, the UW Research Commons Librarian.

Links to the literature and related initiatives are provided on the Task Force web page. Comments from stakeholders and others are provided in *Appendix I*.

Principles

The Research Commons is an exciting opportunity to create an innovative facility which will embody SFU’s three strengths - student-centred, research-driven, and community-engaged.

Its spaces and services will primarily focus on graduate students and their research requirements, with the intention to create a collaborative commons which will also welcome faculty members, senior undergraduates, and other researchers. It is not intended to replicate facilities elsewhere at the university but rather to supplement them in order to support SFU researchers within and across disciplines and to engage the university and external communities with interesting research processes and exciting outputs.

In order to capture the many stages and activities of university-level research and recommend the programs, services and spaces that would best support them, the Task Force found it useful to organize

its findings and ideas according to the “research lifecycle”. While there are a variety of models, the TF chose to adapt the model developed by the United Kingdom’s Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) given its relative simplicity and expandability to many disciplines.

For the Research Lifecycle model and a detailed table mapping Research Commons programs, services and spaces against the research stages, see *Appendix II*.

Recommendations

With attractive and functional space in the Bennett Library highly sought after, and especially by undergraduate students, creating and maintaining a graduate student and research focused space will be dependent on the nature and quality of the programs, services, and facilities of the Research Commons. While all will be welcome whenever appropriate, the graduate student focus will be primary.

As the Research Commons is intended to involve and engage a wide spectrum of faculty, librarians, staff, students, and community members, very effective programming, coordination and development of spaces, services, and activities will be required.

- ***The Library should strongly consider creating a Research Commons Coordinator position or incorporating Research Commons coordination responsibility within an existing position***

Programs

The programs that will take place in the RC space, or through virtual distribution, will be intended to create a Research Commons that is more than a useful study and discussion area. They will be designed to attract graduate students and other researchers, and facilitate engagement within the university and beyond.

Workshops and other programs will address topics at all stages of the research lifecycle, including but not limited to:

- conducting literature reviews, setting up alert services;
- sharing research in progress;
- writing thesis proposals and grant applications;
- data management planning;
- ethics review process; experimental design; statistical analysis,
- using specialized software (e.g. SPSS, SAS, STATA, R, NVivo, etc.), data discovery, data sets, GIS files, data capturing tools;
- RefWorks; Zotero; thesis templates;
- note-taking techniques; data analysis; data curation, RefShare, OJS and OCS options;
- writing journal articles, books, theses;
- author rights, copyright, open access publishing options, OJS journal hosting, OJS user groups, publishing/editor groups;
- presentation skills; poster preparation and presentation;
- etc.

The Task Force recommends that:

- the Research Commons offer workshops, presentations, colloquia, facilitated discussions, and formal and informal gatherings on a wide spectrum of topics with the focus on assisting SFU researchers and on engaging university and external community audiences with SFU's research processes and outputs
- some Research Commons programs may be targeted to specific audiences, e.g. graduate students, with as many as possible open to all interested members of the university and external community
- Research Commons programs be offered not only by university faculty, librarians, SLC and other staff members but also by graduate and undergraduate students, and by external individuals or groups
- whenever possible and as appropriate, Research Commons programs be available through virtual technology to individuals and groups at all SFU campuses and beyond the university

Services

The Research Commons services will include individual and group, physical and virtual assistance on a wide spectrum of topics tailored primarily but not exclusively for graduate students at all stages of their research. To maximize the use of the space and connections to services, there needs to be a "landing pad" or "service foyer" at the centre of the floor, providing both "high tech" and high touch" service options.

The Task Force recommends that:

- the Research Commons provide individual and small group consultations on a wide spectrum of topics (see **Programs** above for sample topics)
- the Research Commons provide basic point-of-use assistance as required, e.g. for a variety of statistical packages, bibliographic tools such as Refworks; as well as knowledgeable referral to other services within the Library or elsewhere on campus
- Research Commons services be offered not only by university faculty, librarians, SLC and other staff members but also by graduate students where appropriate
- a budget to hire graduate student assistants be included in Research Commons planning
- the Research Commons provide event planning and space coordination to facilitate use of the facility
- the Research Commons develop and maintain a web site, including social media options, to create community, to advertise and coordinate RC programs, and to link to programs and services of related interest elsewhere in the university

Spaces (including furniture and technology)

The Research Commons will include collaborative and individual spaces, presentation and study spaces; workshop and consultation spaces, and high tech and high touch service space connecting work and social space. There will be both open and secured spaces for the primary use of graduate students. The Research Commons will be both a destination space and a virtual connection with activities elsewhere at the university and beyond. See *Appendix III* for visual ideas on spaces and furniture.

The Task Force recommends that:

- the Research Commons space be developed in stages, with the initial stage encompassing the approximately 8,000 square feet adjacent to the Thesis Defense Room in the centre of the 2nd floor, and future stages taking advantage of space made available by the possible relocation of the university boiler
- in design stage one, priority be given to student-centred spaces, rather than re-locating librarian or other staff offices
- in future stages, relocation of data librarian, thesis assistant, liaison librarians and/or others to an expanded Research Commons area be strongly considered
- the look and feel of the Research Commons be warm, welcoming, colourful, and comfortable, taking maximum advantage of natural light
- furniture and space dividers be as modular and mobile as possible
- extensive use be made of simple, effective tools such as whiteboard walls and whiteboard tables
- the Research Commons include the windows and natural light along the north side adjacent to the Thesis Defence Room, currently located in staff areas
- the Thesis Defence Room be seamlessly incorporated into the RC design and flow
- the Lam Graduate Research Centre on the 1st floor be incorporated into the RC concept by relocating some collections from the 2nd floor and/or by intentional use of the centre area on the 1st floor
- the Research Commons space contain facilities for eye-catching displays of research and resources
- the Research Commons contain zones for a variety of activities; individual and group, formal and informal, quiet and vocal, shared and lockable/reserved
- the Research Commons include physical and virtual facilities for reading, studying, discussion, presentation, display, consultation, point-of-use assistance
- the Research Commons contain spaces that welcome a wide spectrum of university and community members as well as spaces for the primary or exclusive use of graduate students such as lockable carrels, secure common room(s) and spaces with some “kitchen” features such as kettles and filtered water supply
- consultation areas be designated but not single purpose, e.g. “bookable” booths or alcoves rather than offices
- service point (s) or area (s) be defined not by traditional desks, counters or offices but by colour, lighting, signage, etc.
- a service “landing pad” be developed at the centre of the space to connect work and social space, provide assistance and information, and facilitate referrals and connections
- virtual service connections to assistance located elsewhere be fully explored, e.g. touch screen kiosks; skype, chat, and other laptop options

Follow up required:

To redevelop the approximately 8,000 at the centre of floor 2, a number of collections and staff areas will require relocation:

- the current Sorting Room and Library Equipment staff and functions

- the print collections currently housed on the 2nd floor (Curriculum Collection, periodical indexes, StatsCan publications)
- the Library Equipment storage currently located in rooms 2104 and 2101

To expand the Research Commons concept beyond the 8,000 sq. ft. area, a number of other activities and areas will need relocation or significant re-purposing:

- the lounge on the 2nd floor
- the group study area
- the group study rooms
- lab 2105
- the Lam Research Centre on the 1st floor
- the university boiler

Appendix I

Comments

During February and March, Task Force members solicited input from SFU graduate students, faculty, librarians, staff, and alumni. Comments were sought informally, both in-person and via email, using questions closely based on those developed by the University of Washington Library Research Commons Planning Committee. Task Force member Renee McCallum compiled the responses below. Alumni responses are captured at the end of the document.

Questions:

As we develop the Research Commons plans, it would be very helpful if you could give us feedback on the following questions:

- What kind of information, resources and spaces do researchers/faculty that you work with need access to when doing research? Obstacles to research/collaboration?
- What kind of guidance, programs, and resources do you (or your students) need to become better researchers?
- Are there ways that your organization/dept could collaborate or partner with the Research Commons?
- Do you have services or resources that you use to help your constituents with research?
- Questions or concerns for us?

Responses:

- What kind of information, resources and spaces do researchers/faculty that you work with need access to when doing research? Obstacles to research/collaboration?**

A quick way to find out what other researchers are doing what at the university (keywords, visual method? for easy online profile of research/researcher). Fosters possible interdisciplinary research connections. 2)One is quite aware of those doing similar or related research in one's own field but often difficult to find out what others are doing in a different discipline around similar/related issues. (FCAT- Faculty #3)

Researchers and faculty in my area need access to online journal databases--Elsevier, ERIC, Academic OneFile, etc. (Grad Student -Linguistics)

My research has been largely archive-based, so I am dealing with a lot of electronic files of archival manuscripts.

Access to electronic databases and archival sources may have been useful in my case, although most of what I would have liked to have access are both costly and would have a pretty narrow audience. However, it would be useful if the library had some central e-space where links to the resources they do have are all in the one place to facilitate browsing (House of Commons material, various electronic manuscripts libraries and so on). I will probably be tapping into the Australian Archives online facilities at some stage... and to have information about the various electronic databases available elsewhere would be of value.

I have also used microfilms and so would see that collection, along with the microfilm scanner/reader as possibly being a useful component of the Research Commons.

Major limiting factor has been \$\$\$\$. But, I don't think that is something easily overcome by the Research Commons unless they are able to get a nice little endowment from the UniverCity Trust.

It probably would be useful to have some technical expertise available as part of the Research Commons... people who know SPSS for instance. I suspect Stats Canada material will make up part of this facility and having guidance as to how data can be downloaded and manipulated would be useful. (Grad Student- CMNS & Lecturer CMNS)

Information, resources and support:

- Online library services such as consults of journals and other publications.
- The writing support is very important.
- Communication by e-mail is indispensable.

Obstacles:

- A busy schedule may prevent people to work collaboratively (Grad Student- Education)

I am fortunate to have a space in the faculty of education, a small office provided by my advisor. However I know that there are a lot of students that does not have this spaces and struggle to find quiet spots in the library to write. (Grad Student- Education #2)

Information/Resources

-Scholarly journals/Books

-Techniques

-Techniques / Experts in the field / What other groups specialize in

-Writing help (proposals/journal submissions/scholarships or fellowships)

Space

-Quiet space for reading/writing (in a lot of labs, there are common areas/desks for this)

- Collaboration space – group discussions/meetings
- Rooms for committee meetings/places to practice presentations

Obstacles to research/collaboration

- Knowing where resources are/who to ask for help
- Access to what others are doing in different departments (from 3 Graduate Students)

Information that students need access to when doing research:

- Data sets: international and national data
- Academic journals (in English and other languages)
- Grey literature databases
- Conference abstracts
- Art and media

Resources that students need access to when doing research:

- Statistics support
- Language support
- Vocabulary support/improvement
- Conference listings in their relevant areas
- Grant/conference application supports
- Ethics applications support

Spaces that students need access to when doing research:

- Dedicated space for brainstorming and thought experiments
- *Collaborative* spaces for meeting other students working on similar projects and/or topic areas
- Conference/symposium/forum spaces
- Presentation practice spaces

What are obstacles to research/collaboration?

- Awareness of services, supports and people working in the same area
- Access to resources
- Dedicated/involved supervision

The Archives holdings are comprised of original records, including:

1. records created by university departments;
2. records created by campus community organizations (e.g. SFUFA,TSSU,SFSS, etc.); and
3. private historical research collections that relate to a variety of subjects (e.g. we have a strong interest in archives that relate to women's activism).

What are obstacles to research/collaboration?

Use of archival material is tied to our physical space due to security concerns (a possible obstacle).

All the material in the Archives is unique and some of it is fragile so we do not circulate or lend the material. (Archivist)

•What kind of guidance, programs, and resources do your students need to become better researchers?

-students/researchers in Geography and REM need access to GIS software and datasets, statistical information, sometimes a plotter (large printer for maps etc). Both depts have their own GIS labs, so perhaps this might be an area for shared expertise or collaboration (I know there are other departments that use GIS ... like Crim, sometimes, for example).

-they may need consultation/interview/focus group spaces.

-they definitely could use librarian assistance in planning scoping reviews etc. One of my faculty made a grant application that included a letter of support from me, saying I would be on hand for strategizing about the scoping review (formalized literature review) process that made up several segments of her project. And, indeed, I met with her research assistants and did just this. Maybe there's a way to integrate this kind of activity into the plans for the Research Commons (or into the advertised services, at least)

-I think the grad students could use workshops or programs or consultations on doing lit reviews, setting up alerts, managing citations (hello Refworks) and finding statistical sources. (while I say 'lit review', this could really mean anything starting from basic database searching right on up. Especially when it comes to those who have done more field-oriented undergrads and haven't spent a lot of time doing library research)

-SLC-type grad programs like preparing for conference presentations, etc.... would that be within the scope of the Research Commons? I think it would since it deals with sharing the results of research.

-Also: information about publishing in scholarly journals. How to submit, etc. and some avenue to talk with them about authors' rights, open access, etc.

-assigned carrels with a lockable shelf/drawer. (Liaison librarian)

I think our students need access to understanding the cultural programming that is going on at the best art/music/theatre/film centers around the world, and then as far as possible they need access to any documents of those works. Our students need to see dances/hear concerts/see exhibitions etc. (FCAT- Faculty #1 & 2)

Research workshops built into the classroom. Quick resource guide to different forms for research and access to well organized databases. (FCAT – Faculty #3)

There needs to be a greater amount of interdisciplinary interactions within the research community. For example, a lot of my research spans linguistics, philosophy, and cognitive science. There are different research/writing conventions within these three disciplines--very different

ways at looking at the same questions. I would like to know how to publish a paper within a different discipline by understanding the conventions and questioning schema behind other disciplines.

The biggest obstacle to collaboration is that people in different departments often do not "speak the same language". If we could formulate some ideas on how to understand the basic frameworks of different academic disciplines, cross-discipline collaboration would be much easier. (Grad Student- Linguistics)

There are a wide range of approaches to research. My particular expertise is in the area of archival research and historic research, but I'm very much in the minority in CMNS in this regard. (Grad Student- CMNS & Lecturer CMNS)

Writing for academy is a skill that students must develop. Any support in this regard would be beneficial. (Grad Student- Education)

I need a lot of support in my writing because English is not my first language. I also find it hard to structure my writing in an scholarly format. Although, resources as books and templates can be useful, for me is always better to interact with someone and learn while working in collaboration. (Grad Student- Education #2)

-Mentoring from people with knowledge (how to balance various aspects of research with classes/TAing, or how/when to begin writing your thesis)

-Access to tutorials/workshops on various research areas: eg. Proper data analysis or commonly used stats tests / writing help (3 Graduate Students)

--access to and awareness of subject librarians

--librarian guidance through statistical sources, statistical training, e.g., Crime Statistics. Greater promotion of Research Data Library

--quiet, adult spaces for research

--maybe the study carrels on the 5th floor next to our offices could be turned into quiet study toms? This would be a win-win situation. (Liaison librarian)

- guidance on how to cite archival material

-guidance how to access material to which immediate public access is restricted (either as required by law or donor imposed conditions)

-guidance on copyright as it applies to the reproduction and use of archival material
-guidance on how to conduct research in an archives (i.e. how it differs from research in a library)
(Archivist)

•Are there ways that your organization/dept could collaborate or partner with the Research Commons?

We would be happy to collaborate or partner with the Research Commons. Possibilities include presentations, workshops, guided tours, etc. (Archivist)

I am not sure, perhaps with the organization of small groups of students that have similar research themes, so we can have spaces to discuss our work. (Grad Student- Education #2)

We very much need help with this: at both a faculty and grad student level: facilitate the dissemination of research outputs to a wider audience

if there can be any library links, or activities, what needs to be done is video audio text documentation of the research and then dissemination through the web. If LIDC can be involved that is great however they would need to be under the almost complete direction of the researcher as the research shouldn't be presented with the corporate/promotional slant that is their norm, and certain aesthetic choices would need to be in consultation with the artists. A resource such as this at the library would be used by researchers not only at our school but of course those researching our students and faculty. (FCAT- Faculty #1 & 2)

Yes, possibly. Because we are mostly artists and not conventional scholars in our SCA dept, we need to reframe what research is. It would be good to explore this in a more public manner. E.g. Professor Henry Daniels teaches a methodology course in our grad program about artist-researchers. Components could be viewed online. (FCAT- Faculty #3)

I think it would be cool to hold a series of "round table discussions" on somewhat broad research questions (i.e. Where does language come from?). Anyone who has done any research/thinking related to this topic, no matter their discipline, could come and share their work and ideas. That way we could get a number of different perspectives and approaches to solving similar questions. (Grad Student- Linguistics)

At the moment I don't see immediate ways, although it probably would be useful for some Research Methods classes. (Grad Student- CMNS & Lecturer CMNS)

Yes, targeted workshops addressing specific needs of students might help. A writing club may help, too. However, it is difficult to fix appointments as people are usually busy. (Grad Student-Education)

-Provide a list of resources or “go to people” in the department (3 Graduate Students)

- Potentially, GSS social space could be used as watercooler space
- Promoting awareness of the Research Commons and its services (MBB Graduate Student)

•Do you have services or resources that you use to help your constituents with research?

There are several resources that the Archives have developed to help our constituents with research. We would like to see access to these resources made available in the Research Commons. These resources include:

- online finding aids (equivalent to catalogue records)
- guide to finding aids (how to read and use a finding aid)
- thematic research guides (e.g. Women's activism, campus politics, etc.)
- introductory guide to the use of archives and archival material
- archival citation guide
- research agreement application form
- online archival description database (forthcoming) (Archivist)

I work with Renee who is amazingly helpful and committed to help students like me who struggle with the language. Besides her help in writing, she takes the time to understand and discuss with students and make sure to help them write what they want instead of writing for them, I believe that this is specially helpful for graduate students. It would be good to help other students in this ways. (Grad Student- Education #2)

Mostly, my research is my studio practice so I have resources professionally to facilitate this. In all honesty, I am not interested in making more connections to other researchers as I am desperate to carve out some space to do my own research. I find that more connections mean more time spend on email providing someone more information (to grad students and perhaps other colleagues) rather than working through my work in the studio. (FCAT- Faculty #3)

If I am ever given the opportunity to teach a Media History class, or one on research methods, I probably would construct an assignment around a portion of the electronic archives I have (certain records, such as those from the US Government, are in the public domain, so can be used for these purposes). (Grad Student- CMNS & Lecturer CMNS)

I have been supported in my writing. That help is huge and I hope other people can get such a support as well. (Grad Student- Education)

Supervisor

-Online journal articles

-Friends in labs from same departments (3 Graduate Students)

We provide some grants for student-led conferences, symposiums and/or forums and *pending Council approval* travel grants for conferences and research experiences

We provide advocacy for students regarding their research needs on a case-by-case basis (MBB Graduate Student)

•Questions or concerns for us?"

Perhaps because artistic research is somewhat different, I find these questions or imagining of a "research commons" quite vague. I myself do a lot of "hard" research (that is not in the studio) on various topics of aesthetics, the law, neuroscience, contemporary art, etc. and I'm sure my colleagues have an equally large range. I do it all from my computer at home, and I can't imagine changing that too much. I don't often need books from the library, but occasionally I do (that might just be me as I tend to buy the books I need as I can't handle the extra time to come to burnaby or the total lack of parking at harbour center, I always end up incurring more fines that the books cost unfortunately). What would be great would be a better searchable data base of researchers at SFU and some sense of their degree of openness to other types of research etc. Perhaps we state our "research interests" too narrowly ...as these should be proper academic areas of specialization, however that doesn't really help to see the range of things people are in to...not sure how to go about that. A long blog that lists recent publications/exhibitions/performances etc. by faculty? with a very short abstract for each? That would take a lot of person hours to put together and maintain. (FCAT- Faculty #1 & 2)

Grad students and advanced undergrads (Honours students) seem to have the most time to benefit from an interdisciplinary research commons event. Not sure what this event might be. I think these initiatives are best when structured into the program. (FCAT- Faculty #3)

General Comments:

I would certainly be happy to talk to you in person about this initiative since my main issue is access to current works in the wider arts domain. I can usually find most of the books I'm looking for and when I don't I usually order them. Sylvia Roberts always responds very promptly on this front. However, as far as access to current media (dances, performance works, media works, etc.) is concerned YouTube is more current than we are (not to knock what we are doing in any way).
(FCAT- Faculty)

I think in ENSC that the research undertaken has enough obvious sources and enough guidance is provided by the supervisors that the research itself is not a big issue. But the writing of the thesis is a major concern.

From my perspective, the most important thing that the student learning commons could do for students is offer regular workshops (perhaps once per semester?) about writing the thesis and how to format it. Penny Simpson used to do that in ENSC 803 for us.

Perhaps a one semester course in general writing skills would also be useful, especially for ESL/EAL students (feel free to send any reasonably talented science students our way -- ENSC 803). And a list of professional thesis editors would be a godsend!!! (ENSC- Senior Lecturer)

SFU ALUMNI Responses:

What kind of information, resources and spaces do researchers/faculty that you work with need access to when doing research?

A dedicated space for current students to review guidelines, connect with advisors, and reference published theses would be most helpful. Had this been available when I was completing my dissertation and graduation requirements, I would have picked up a missing research ethics form and process. Self-paced tutorials about using templates, RefWorks, etc. would also be a valuable on-site resource.

Obstacles to research/collaboration?

Commuter and mature students have little time to dedicate to activities outside of class. There are few opportunities to collaborate with other disciples/researchers or to access needed resources, given that these resources and opportunities are spread out across campuses and the semester. A Research Commons would be a great vehicle for centralizing these resources/opportunities. A Research Commons would also be a great marketing tool for attracting graduate students (more store is being placed in support resources for student recruitment and retention, these days).

What kind of guidance, programs, and resources do students need to become better researchers?

Students and alumni need ongoing exposure to positive and innovative research methods/examples, along with interdisciplinary-led sessions that promote learning across disciplines. I think that all practitioners (including faculty) benefit from remaining current about evidence-based research practices - I just read about a clinical epidemiology session that UofT is offering its students and alumni (I am also a UofT alumna) to ensure that they are better consumers and producers of research – I would love to see that offered by SFU (see: <http://www.utoronto.ca/hpme/cei/index.html>).

Are there ways that your organization/department could collaborate or partner with the Research Commons?

Use of SFU alumni to present their research, discuss the impact of research in educational practice, brown bag sessions to fine-tune skills and meet others engaged in research would all be appreciated. I recently attended the Alumni Awards dinner, as Pat Hibbitts guest (EdD cohort colleague) and we were talking about just these topics.

Here is my experience as an entering as a mature student (returning 14 years after completing my undergrad in music at UBC).

- 1) I'll start with what would have been ideal! This is probably not something that would come under your area, but it would have been wonderful to be a part of a support group for mature returning students – it is quite a maze to walk through when you come back and enter a new university. Particularly at this time as back when I was a student computers were just not really happening so everything, ... everything is new in the student world. All the library skills, how everything works, etc. And it was quite lonely as most of the students are much younger etc. also the whole thing on supervision at a grad level – what a bad dream that was. I had no idea that a student could even ask for a different supervisor. This all falls under the student society and I'm sure – not your department, likely student rights are addressed somewhere already, but I was downtown and didn't know whom to ask.
- 2) I needed basic skills on how to write a research paper (and thesis) – I didn't even know what APA was (I would not admit that except I can tell you anything!), had a very fuzzy recollection of how to reference and had very very rusty writing skills period.
- 3) How to prepare for putting a thesis together – you know from my experience, that I put my thesis in a template that Penny provided and then over the two years, I had to keep sending it back and forth, cutting and pasting, my supervisors using track changes for their editing – by the time it got to you, it was a disaster zone. Am I right?? I don't know what the solution would be for that, but I think I would use a word document and then as you are nearing the end, start to paste it into a template? I don't know. Part of the problem was that I was using Endnote as a referencing system.
- 4) Tables and figures – well, Penny sure tried to make that understandable. All Greek to me. But then my brain was so focused on my thesis work by then.

5) Tutors for all of the above problems...if students who were experienced could offer their services, to help for pay maybe? I found a tutor to help me with stats – a huuuge help to me. I see at the Burnaby campus all the editors who can help but you don't know who they are....wish I knew you when I started!!! So I had to do a lot of asking and digging before I located one. Happy to pay someone – but of course, students are all busy. Who has time? I sure didn't. But that would be ideal if it could be worked out.

This is an amazing idea because when I was deep into my writing and in need of further material it all seemed so overwhelming to begin even looking.

My supervisor could suggest some books on her shelf, but if there was a refworks type of place to share with other researchers in my field, I would have been so much more ahead.

I did not even use refworks...it was too overwhelming even to go to a workshop on it and I am not techie. If other researchers shared their refworks, notification of new articles, books, journals....online journals, even blogs..... it would be great.

Books I wanted were often out so the time it took to get them was discouraging, as well. If there were annotated bibliographies easily available or unofficial or official peer reviews on the books or chapters of the books, that would help. Or, if I could easily find other authors who used the book as reference, that would have helped.

If there was a monthly email to professors and grad students to remind them to contribute to an ongoing file of new or newly discovered material, it would be amazing. If submission was easy, we could have an ongoing folder that we could just take a minute to transfer to a link in the library. There is a link missing between students and students, students and profs. It should be more than looking to a shelf and suggesting a book in a prof's office or a casual chat to a fellow student that might bring you to a new direction with a new source.

These are my thoughts right now, without really spending hours considering them. I hope they are not redundant as I don't know refworks well. Hope it can lead somewhere.

In my brief experience at SFU, the major problems for grad students in archaeology are access to guidance/resources on statistical analysis and how to make the thesis/dissertation template work for Mac. A number of students would like to see a template that works in Apple's Pages program. Word is very unstable and the one for Mac is not that great according to Mac using archaeology graduate students. I can't speak to this because I use PC.

A Virtual Place

- not sure if a 'place' would be well utilized with today's independent technology access. People seem to 'go it alone' from home
- I may have missed the information, but a workshop (on-line) regarding the template and a program like End Note would have assisted me.
- I did appreciate being able to contact Penny at 1-2 times when I needed some clarification.

Online Access to Library

- one common theme, after we graduate we only have access to the library physically not virtually. It would be useful to access resources fully as alumni.

It's several years ago that I researched on campus, but here goes:

- I envision the space as a more sedate, less chaotic environment that would better support the contemplative energies of researchers than does the library at large.
- It would be good to staff it with a full-time a) research resource person and b) software support person.
- Maybe a small room or two for video-conferencing with researchers doing similar research at other universities.
- How about a sort of quick reference system of current, most-cited scholars for each and every academic research topic? This would provide new grad students with a readily accessible baseline from which to begin their investigations.
- I think it would be great to have a roster of evening presentations/discussions that brought interested students and faculty together. Wine and cheese would help. I don't know about other departments, but mine had no provisions for any student/faculty collaborative events whatsoever. This was a big disappointment to me, that there was no scholarly spirit of collaboration or mutual interest. The prevailing ethos was that faculty were perennially overtaxed and burnt out from their many tasks and obligations. But I think that needs to change. It was really just every man for himself (gender bias noted). So, having a designated grad research facility could be an important step in addressing this void of student/faculty relations.

I highly recommend SFU Burnaby Statistical Consulting Services, Ian Bercovitz as a resource for the upcoming library Research Commons. Ian Bercovitz provides expert statistical advice.

Please refer to the Statistical Consulting Services website for a list of services offered:

<http://www.stat.sfu.ca/people/consulting/burnabycons>

I am not sure if a "place" would be well utilized with today's independent technology access. People seem to "go it alone" from home.

I did appreciate being able to contact Penny at 1-2 times when I needed some clarification.

I may have missed the information, but a workshop (on-line) regarding the template and a program like End Note would have assisted me.

I think the one common theme I heard from my class mates was that after we graduate we only have access to the library physically not virtually. It would be useful to access resources fully as alumni.

Appendix II - Research Commons– Support for the Research Lifecycle

The following table maps programs, services, and spaces needed to support graduate students and other researchers against the stages of the “research lifecycle” and served as the conceptual basis for the Task Force discussions and recommendations.

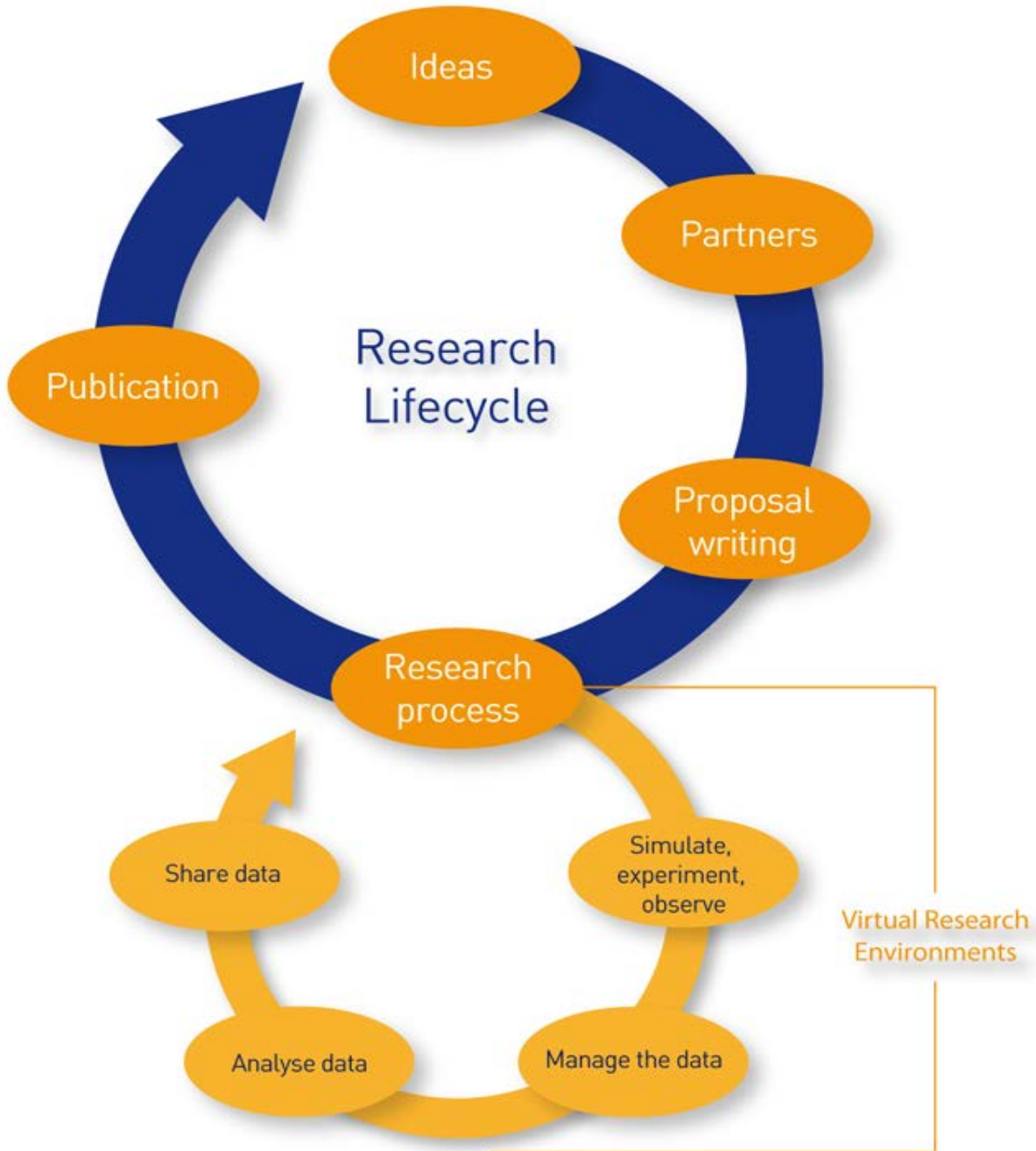


Diagram developed by and made available from the United Kingdom’s *Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)* at <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/campaigns/res3/jisichelp.aspx>

RESEARCH LIFECYCLE	NOTES	PROGRAMS	SERVICES	SPACES
Ideas	Generated through structured activities, e.g. reviewing literature, attending presentations, or by serendipity, e.g. browsing journals, conversations with colleagues, viewing displays	Workshops on conducting literature reviews, locating background reading, setting up alert services; presentations and colloquia on research in progress; research “cafes”	Consultations with research librarians and others; workshop and space programming coordination	Eye-catching displays of current research projects; physical and virtual spaces for informal and formal colloquia and presentations; spaces for small group discussion with “kitchen table” ambiance; whiteboard walls and tables; consultation spaces; spaces for reading and reflecting
Partners	Located through formal and informal networks	Meet and greet events;	Event and space coordination	As above
Proposal writing	Many elements in proposal writing	Workshops on thesis proposal writing, grant-writing, data management planning; ethics review process	Consultations on all aspects of proposal writing provided by various campus units in RC space; workshop and space programming coordination	Effective displays of relevant information for use and referral; consultation spaces
Research Process	Research processes vary enormously across disciplines			
<i>Simulate, experiment, observe</i>		Workshops on experimental design; conducting library or archival research; conducting quantitative / qualitative research, etc.	Consultations	Consultation space; informal discussion space; spaces for concentrated reading and studying

<i>Manage the data</i>	Data can be numeric or text or object (?)	Workshops on statistical analysis, general software, e.g. Office products, specialized software (e.g. SPSS, SAS, STATA, R, N, etc.), data discovery, data sets, GIS files, data capturing tools; RefWorks; Zotero; thesis templates; note-taking techniques	Consultations with data librarian; point of use assistance;	Consultation space; service area; physical/virtual help desk; teaching lab with computers (imaged laptops? workstations?)
<i>Analyse data</i>		Workshops on data analysis	Consultations; point-of-use assistance	Consultation space; service area; physical/virtual help desk
<i>Share data</i>	Raw or processed data needs to be curated and kept so others can access and use them.	Workshops on data curation, RefShare, OJS and OCS options; writing journal articles, books, theses	IR for small data sets, [data repositories, resource discovery tools?].	Spaces for writing; powered tables for laptops
<i>Publication / dissemination</i>	Help to make the outputs of research accessible.	Workshops on; author rights, copyright, open access publishing options, OJS journal hosting, OJS user groups, publishing/editor groups; presentation skills; poster preparation	Consultations re thesis submission, writing topics, presentation skills; information re IR	Effective displays of relevant information for use and referral; consultation spaces; presentation spaces; virtual presentation spaces and technology