Finding the Library:
An Institutional Assessment of the Undergraduate Experience

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Undergraduate degrees: Arts, Science, Business Administration, Criminal Justice, Nursing, Computer Science, Communications

- FLE 8,200 / FTE 12,000
- Average age 23
- 63 % women
- commuter campus / 80% Calgary

- 380 faculty / 760 support staff/ 85 management

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MRU Library: People and information inspiring learning and exploration
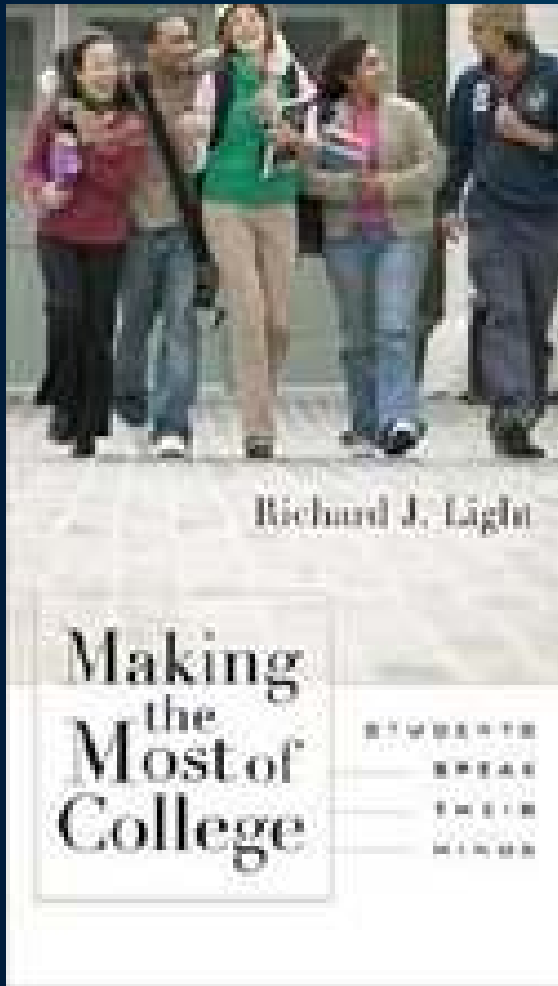

- ✓ 17 faculty
- ✓ 48 support staff

- ✓ Circ 1973 facility
- ✓ 480 seats
- ✓ 3500 / day – gate counts

- ✓ Collection growth
- ✓ Scholarship

The best undergraduate university in Canada by every measure of student success and satisfaction.

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MRU Assessment Seminar

Richard J. Light

Making the Most of College

✓ first-hand from students, in-depth and in their own words, about their undergraduate experience

✓ in particular the experience of students early in their degree programs

Rather than defining assessment as testing what students know now, my colleagues define it as a process of evaluating and improving current programs, encouraging innovations, and then evaluating each innovation's effectiveness.

Richard J. Light

Institutional Project

- ✓ Steering Committee

- ✓ Seminar Group
  - ✓ Working Teams

Instrument -- Questions

- ✓readiness and transition
- ✓teaching and learning
- ✓personal growth
- ✓relationships with faculty/staff
- ✓campus engagement
- ✓academic supports
- ✓orientation and advising
- ✓general education program

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Gathering data

- Sample of 600 – 114 acceptances -- 97

- In-depth semi-structured interviews -- 23 questions

- Distribution based on faculty enrollment and gender distribution (28/59)

- student interviewers --March 2010 (6 days), 35-75 minutes

- 1300 (app.) pages of transcripts

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Analyzing data

10 teams / 10 transcripts

Preliminary analysis
 Key themes
  Quotable quotes
  Process issues
  Key words / phrases

In-depth textual analysis

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Themes

Small Class Size

- Interaction with faculty members & other students
- Help at hand
- More feedback and assessment
- Interactive classrooms

Student-faculty relationship

- Accessibility and approachability
- Concern and caring
- Advising and advice
- Personalization

Transition issues

- Research, writing and citation
- Course workload
- Time management
- Social transition
- Orientation and point of need

Teaching and Learning

- Interactive vs. passive
- Study partner(s)
- Group work
- Debate/discussions/presentations
- Experiential learning
- Learning to learn

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Student engagement in campus

- Lack of interest / time
- Other priorities
- Unaware
- First-year focus

General Education

- Love / hate
- Challenge / rigor
- Course consistency
- Lasting impact

Finding the Library

- ✓ The power of not asking

- ✓ Answers waiting for questions

- ✓ Reading between the lines

What we did not ask

✓ 48 / 97 transcripts mentioned the Library or librarians in some meaningful way(s)

✓ Highs and lows
✓ Confirmation and surprises
✓ What and where
    ✓Space/teaching/people - everywhere

What would you change…

space

I would think that---I know they can't really control this, but the library should be a place of just quiet. Whenever you go in there, it's supposed to be a library, it's supposed to be quiet, and it never is. And I know it's kind of out of control, but that's something I would change for sure. And then the parking; making it more available, or having one closer to the EB Building, 'cause they just got rid of that parking lot.

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Changes...

The biggest most important thing is having a space that you can feel confident walking in there and sit down in peace and quiet and focus. I is so hard because everyone is in there is yapping away, talking on cell phones, eating, chewing gum really loudly, blasting their iPods so you can hear them from four cubicles away. There needs to be respect in the Library for the students. Some of them are great but the is always the bad few. It needs to be kind of enforced to create a positive environment. It doesn't need to be enforced in a bad way. There just needs to be someone going in and saying, "Hey, you can't have that, it's unacceptable in here. It's not OK here this is a learning space." That's my biggest thing.

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Surprises…

The noise in the Library is phenomenal. I have got to wear, bring music, mp3 player and headphones, to drown out noise around me. I don't study well with music but in order to do research and use the books that are there or to find books you have no choice but to be in the Library. The noise in there is phenomenal.

Engagement…

Just by trying to spend more time at Mount Royal. Like at first I definitely I went to class and then I went home, and I didn't even want to study here like in the library or anything. *Now I find today, like there's so many places to just hang out at Mount Royal, and not during class. That that has really helped me.* *You just have places to go and enjoy yourself between class and not just have to worry about academics, there's other things to make you enjoy your day other than classes. So that definitely helped me face the fact that I didn't really want to be here that much.*

Orientation…

I have never been on an orientation tour so I don't know what they consist of but I think one thing that should be on the orientation tours is … like the cheapest places to eat on campus. How you can get around not paying for a locker. Little tricks, I don't know, quiet places to study and that the Library is terrible, only go there if you need a computer or books and then leave right away. What's open late at night? Where can you smoke? Those kinds of things, in mind my, would be left out of the tour and I think those are essential survival skills for any student.

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Least positive...

space

Well just, I mean I can just use the Library as an example. The Library is a joke. You go in there and there's people talking on their cell phones and yelling at each other across you know, the computers, it's like, you're in a library, you're not supposed to respect the people around you, you're not supposed to be talking. You're not supposed to be talking on your cell phone, I mean you shouldn't even have your ringer on, you know like it's supposed to be quiet

*Parking, the Library and the soap issue
are probably been my like [issues]*

Academic supports….

teaching

Well, I think we already do have---like, we do have library sessions where we do go to the library classroom, and we do get taught---learn certain techniques. It's really fast though, so you can't learn it in one day. You have to, over time, understand it yourself. So they could have slowed down a bit. Maybe split it into two days, where we learn certain techniques one day, and then the other techniques the next day. Make it more like that.

I actually haven't found a necessity to utilize any of the student learning services or anything like that. I haven't even gone to the library or anything now that I think about it.

Out-of-class learning…

Out-of-class learning activities would be going to the library and figuring out how to search a book with the encyclopedia. Like, with the quotations, and the "and's" and the "or's". Because I did do that in an in-class thing, but sometimes the librarian is teaching so many people at once, she doesn't know who's following her, and who's not. So actually going to the library and asking the librarian to help you is really helpful. To me, anyways.

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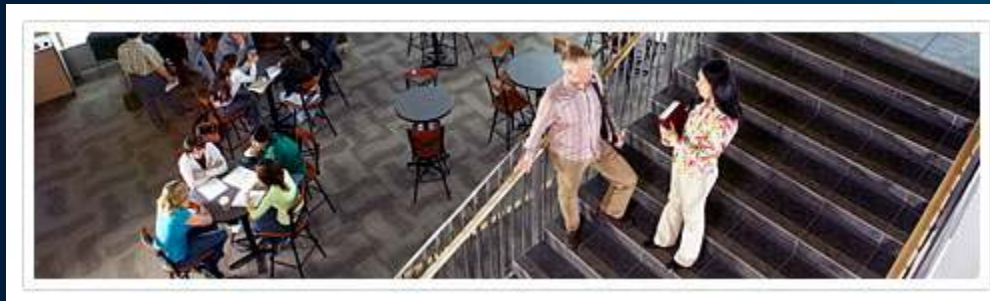
Assignments for best learning…

I guess there's been a - most of the research papers I've written because they make you like read articles and go to the library, do some research *and all that (--)* *it really takes a learning like beyond the course content, and you learn a lot more that way. You get a more holistic learning I guess.*

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Out-of-class learning

A lot of the research tutorials… that I have had to do for my chemistry courses when they take you into the computer lab and give you *pointers on research with the online catalog in the Library. That's been really helpful.* *Finding specific journal articles that would be helpful to you and your area of study. Also, with the Learning Services the citation people were great. I had no idea what APA even stood for before I went there.*

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Transition and academic preparation…

In high school back home, you don't know what is MLA, and what is APA, and that kind of thing, and how to reference, and how to use the library. *Actually, you know, I'm still not very good at how to use library databases, to tell you the truth.* *So I'm still not good at that. But I'm still---I'm good enough to look for what I need, but I'm still not good at that, for sure.*

Maybe fitting in socially and maybe just kind of knowing how things work at Mount Royal. I remember being a first year and going into the Library and it was really intimidating and you didn't know if you are allowed to just walk up to a computer or you know and just not understanding how things like that work.

Orientation…

citation

There are a lot of resources on line so I constantly look in the Library and I very thankful that the Library has cite sources there, so that was really awesome. Some of the guides are kind of, just with how the information is changing, which is a common topic in all of my communication things, how everything is changing and getting faster and more technology based and how do we cite this and how do we reference that. It's still kind of a challenge with the new media sources I am referencing. I am referencing to and figuring out kind of how to allocate credit where it is due. It doesn't help that the citations styles change every year or something.

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Academic preparation…

I think that maybe sources and better citation and referencing should be more in depth in high school. Maybe not to the university level but you get into university and you are blinded by it. My first paper I wrote I was like, "What? What the hell is APA? This makes no sense". It's a culture shock into university that I don't think needs to be that way. You can be prepared for that major transition which, I don't think high schools do a good job of that.

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Transition…

Obviously the workload was quite a bit different than high school but that has to be expected, and oh, citing. *We have no lessons in high school at all about citations or bibliographies or how to do that and then my teacher never taught us and just said go to the Library and check the APA citing and of course, being the student that I am, I didn't even bother.* *So when I handed in my assignment without a bibliography and got a zero back, I had no idea why. I didn't realize how important it was so… I think citing, definitely. A lot of teachers now I'm finding like in my first year open studies didn't happen, but now I'm PR* *we have a library sessions with an instructor telling us how to do APA, how to use the resources from the library. I think that's really, really, really important.* *So like even if you do it like twice in one semester, like it's always worth doing because there's always something new to learn and new resources. People forget and it's always changing. The APA book's always changing, so… I think it's really, really important for students, for sure*

Academic preparation…

citation

I actually did phenomenally well in high school so it was all very, very easy and redundant to me…. The transition from high school to post secondary was a bit of a jump. I think the biggest jump was with citations because they don't teach proper citation styles in high school. I came here and my first class was like, " don't forget you have to do it in APA and cite your sources and references and Chicago" and I was like what is Chicago and what's APA I have never heard of these things before. That is probably one of my long-standing criticisms of the K -12 system of education. That was the biggest jump the citation and getting use to cite your sources and references …academic kind of research because in high school it's nothing.

Academic supports…

I am aware of them and I have tried to access them but I find that there is not always as helpful as they want to be. I went in there and I was like, "hey can you look over my bibliography and make sure it's formatted correctly?" and she was like, "well you need an appointment and we don't make appointments on Fridays". I went to the library and I thought I would just ask a Librarian and I finally got one to look over it and she said, "yeah it's OK" but there was no feedback or anything. I wanted someone to say it looks OK and maybe you should do this or whatever or this is completely wrong start over or use this book. I didn't get that. They didn't even really ask me what my question was at the Learning Services they were just like, " we don't make appointments on Fridays". I was like, "A******, help me out here, isn't that what you are here for?"

Orientation…

Obviously, showing them around the campus and…showing them you know, about the learning centre and stuff and I think they go over the importance of that. And the people in the library are really helpful, like I didn't really use them at first but then like, once you get to know them like, and they come to classes and stuff, like they're so helpful. And, well like, how when I went to it they had nurses together so then you get to meet people in your classes and stuff and meet new people. But I guess we don't really branch out that much.

Academic support..

Well, I did go to instructors when I needed help. Like, I was not so sure about how to do MLA or anything, but I went to the library for support whenever I needed it, and I was pretty fine.

people

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Caring and concern…

Yeah, L**** M**** in the library, she's like specifically for the nursing program, and she's very kind and compassionate and wants to see us all do well so she makes the time for anybody kind of at all hours as she possibly can to help us out. ….with her, just going above and beyond like, she may not be expected to be here, kind of on campus, but she'll make the office time for you. So having kind of that, I know a lot of the instructors just have their hours in the office and then, that's kind of it, but I mean if you have a really big concern, she's given out her office number, she gets back to you really quickly. So, having that is really nice. And she'll email you back over the weekend, and a lot of the instructors don't do that, because it's kind of "their weekend" type thing.

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Designing orientation...

I would try to lean to those little campus life things. Like those things that you learn in your second year where it's like "this librarian's really awesome", or like you can free breakfast up in Wykham house every day. I guess its ways to make things better, to make your experiences easier.

Best advice…

I think it's one of my instructors in the nursing ones and she just helped with the managing time, time management … and she told us about …the services of the library – about the nursing librarian. So she helped with that essay and it's just the writing, she helped me with the writing and the time management

Care and concern…

We have a specific librarian who's involved with the Communications department, and I've seen her in every single class that I've taken, even the Gen Ed's, so maybe she does this for a lot of courses, but she just has a how to utilize the library, and do searches, and hone in on what it is you're looking for. I thought that was excellent. The staff, in terms of the library, the clinic, the Rec Center, and the administrative staff too when they're not loosing my transcripts have seemed very engaged and supportive and helpful. Coming from a retail background, what I would call excellent customer service.

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Skill levels…

people

They weren't very good. ---They've improved since I got here, that's for sure. Like learning strategies, I didn't take any of their courses, but just when I was writing my first paper I went down to figure out how to use MLA and APA referencing styles because that was completely new for me. That's where it helps to like, one of the first classes I had first semester was he like, *my professor, took us to the library and helped us learn where we can go to find journal articles and how to reference stuff and what we should include in a paper and what we shouldn't include.* *So I like it, and another teacher did that this semester and I like how they kind of help you write the essay instead of just giving you this question and writing it.*

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Academic support…

Yeah. I haven't used them, but I know there's certain areas that you can go that they'll help you, and they'll look at your paper. In one of my Journalism courses, we do have the librarian helping us teach too, so having her around is a lot easier than just going to someone random, 'cause I could just go up to her and be like, "could you read this over, or help me research a topic?" Because finding sources, sometimes, that are scholarly is kind of hard, so having a librarian help teach you, it makes it s fun easier. And the teach you how to how to get into certain programs and everything.

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Surprise…

people

The library and all it has to offer. It keep surprising me because, I never really went to libraries in general. If I had to do research papers I'd like find stuff on the internet or where it's like right at my finger tips, and if I had to get books I'd get someone to go find them for me like I don't know how libraries work. ---And every once in a while when I do have to go into the library and I ask the librarians or the research assistants or anyone who works there --- they just have so much knowledge about everything. They know cute little short cuts on the web, they know how to properly type in the search engine, and they even have like library chat messenger, which is just so cool! Like they, are, the library is really determined to stay with the times and to make things easy with the students to make the library more accessible to students and it's awesome… there's really not a single student that they couldn't help. They would always be able to find a way around anything, for the students. So it's really awesome in there.

Answers waiting for our questions: putting action to the themes

✓ Class size
  ➤ personalized
  ➤ hands-on and interactive
  ➤ learning tools

✓ Faculty/student interaction
  ➤ success & retention
  ➤ being in the classroom
  ➤ faculty support
  ➤ individual help
  ➤ point of need services

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Most impactful…

I had one teacher, my economics teacher, actually taught me to scratch the surface on everything, which meant dig deeper and find out the true meaning behind everything.

✓ **Teaching & learning**

➤ integrated IL, research, citation

➤ partnerships (sister services)

➤ time management

➤ pedagogical improvement – institutional level

➤ facilitating group work

➤ hours, services and facilities

✓ **GNED**

➤ programmatic approach to IL

➤ credit instruction

➤ critical thought

➤ cohort support

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GNED…

At first I kind of thought that they were useless, especially that Ideas that Matter, but it really help me because I could relate the information back to my other classes. Globalization is a really good, the one I am currently in. It seems to try to bring ideas together and just gives you like a base knowledge for a bunch of different courses.
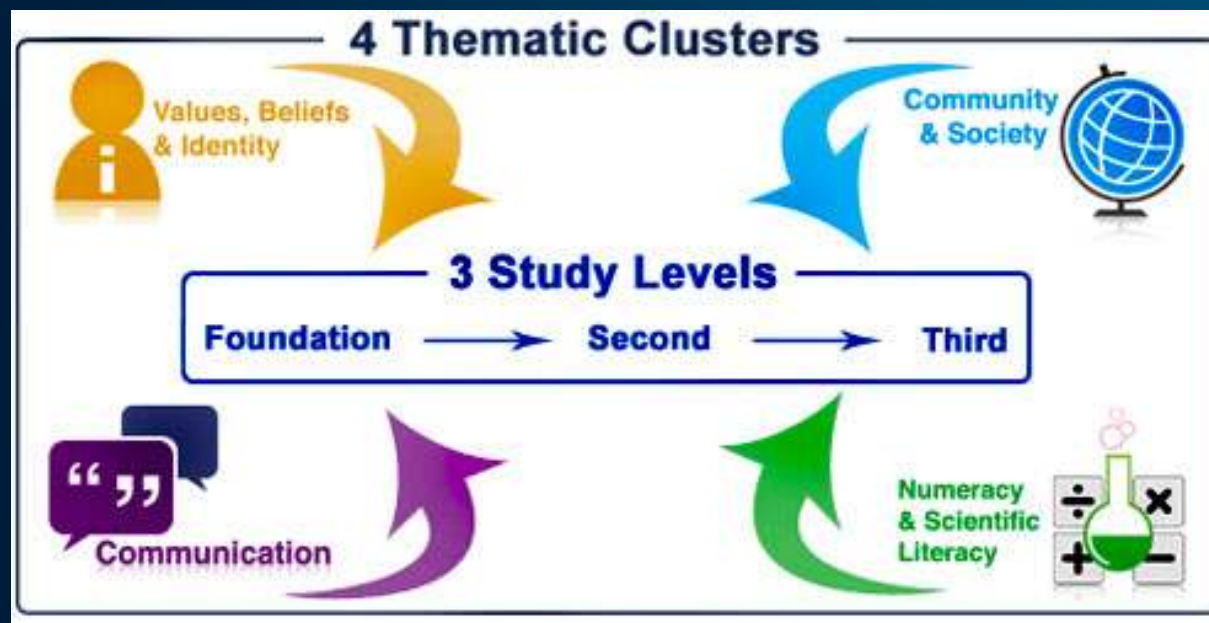
✓ Transition

  ➢ high school partnerships

  ➢ Educate and engage at institutional level

  ➢ scaled orientation

✓ Campus Engagement

  ➢ place for engagement

  ➢ facilitate debate and critical thought

  ➢ partner with clubs

  ➢ spaces for engagement

  ➢ hours and services

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Helping students succeed: reading between the lines

Value of the Library

Student work-life

Space design

What they didn't say

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Leveraging what we learned

✓University initiative - high visibility / interest
✓Holistic view of students success
✓Collaboration fostering partnerships
✓Institutional conversations and solutions
✓Measuring success
✓Continual improvement

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Compare, contrast and inform

Assessment context

- ✓ NSSE
- ✓ CUSC
- ✓ Institutional surveys
- ✓ Library metrics & assessments
- ✓ MRU Assessment Seminar v.2

Assessment Seminar Challenges

- Data, data, data
- Training and quality
- Balancing action and evidence
- Sustaining engagement
- Managing and communicating results

The key step is systematic gathering of information for sustained improvement

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Dr. Richard Light

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Questions?

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