

## **The (In)visibility of Academic Librarians in the Cyclical Program Review Process: A Corpus-Based Study of Two Ontario Universities**

## **La visibilité (ou l'invisibilité) des bibliothécaires universitaires dans le processus cyclique d'évaluation des programmes : une étude basée sur le corpus de deux universités ontariennes**

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**Abstract:** The library is often referred to as the heart of a university, but numerous studies reveal that librarians perceive that they are sidelined in the academic program review process, even though library resources and services would seem to be important to program quality. Using a corpus-based approach, we investigate six documents associated with the program review process for 10 graduate programs at two Ontario universities. These more objective results confirm the perception-based findings of other studies and lead us to consider what is at the root of the problem: is it a gap between faculty and librarians or could it be a more general disengagement of faculty with quality assurance processes in higher education? We end with some recommendations for ways in which librarians can become more meaningfully involved in academic program review.

**Keywords:** academic librarians, academic program review, faculty-librarian relations, Ontario's Quality Assurance Framework, quality assurance

**Résumé :** La bibliothèque est souvent considérée comme le cœur d'une université. Pourtant de nombreuses études révèlent que les bibliothécaires se sentent mis de côté dans le processus d'évaluation des programmes universitaires, même si la qualité des ressources et des services de la bibliothèque sont jugés importants pour les programmes. En utilisant une approche basée sur le corpus, nous étudions six documents associés au processus d'évaluation des programmes dans dix programmes d'études supérieures enseignés dans deux universités de l'Ontario. Ces résultats plus objectifs confirment les résultats fondés sur la perception obtenus dans d'autres études et nous amènent à considérer ce qui est à l'origine du problème : s'agit-il d'un fossé entre le corps professoral et les bibliothécaires, ou pourrait-il s'agir d'un

désengagement plus général du corps professoral à l'égard des processus d'assurance de la qualité dans l'enseignement supérieur ? Nous terminons par quelques recommandations sur les moyens par lesquels les bibliothécaires peuvent s'impliquer de manière plus significative dans l'examen des programmes universitaires.

Mots-clés : Bibliothécaires universitaires, relations professeurs-bibliothécaires, assurance de la qualité, évaluation des programmes universitaires, système d'assurance de la qualité de l'Ontario

## Introduction

Higher education has a long tradition of viewing the library as the metaphorical heart of a university, implying that the library is central to the fulfillment of the university's mission. However, as Weiner (2009, 4) points out, although the presence of a library is generally assumed in universities, the literature on higher education rarely includes the library in empirical studies or reports dealing with institutional performance. This observation is echoed by Jackson (2017, 82), who notes that the literature on library quality rarely goes beyond the immediate stakeholders (that is, students, faculty, and university administrators). However, Jackson goes on to reason that if libraries do indeed factor significantly into university quality, then library services should also be of concern to external stakeholders that have a vested interest in the quality of post-secondary education, such as governments and accreditation agencies (82). Researchers such as Weiner (2009) and Jackson (2017) investigate how the value of academic libraries has been framed in different forms of external evaluation such as university rankings, external accreditation reports, and student surveys. However, to the best of our knowledge, no study has investigated how university libraries are represented as part of an institutional quality assurance (QA) process, such as cyclical program reviews, even though academic program review is widely recognized as a vital element of QA in higher education, both across Canada and elsewhere. The goal of such reviews is to assure program quality and encourage continuous improvement. Moreover, though the review process itself may be largely internal, the final results are often public or reported to external stakeholders.

If we accept that academic libraries are indeed central to a university's mission and that they essentially exist to improve the quality of studying and research, then academic librarians have the potential to play a more prominent role in enhancing the quality of academic programs and, by extension, in the program review process. For instance, in the Canadian province of Ontario, academic programs at publicly assisted universities must be evaluated at least once every eight years. The Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (OUCQA) (2019) has developed a Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) that is used to guide these cyclical program reviews. The QAF places a strong emphasis on curriculum and instruction—areas to which academic librarians could make valuable contributions, such as through information literacy instruction (for example, Massis 2011; Julien, Gross, and Latham 2018) or copyright instruction (for example, Snyder Gibson and Chester-Fangman 2011; George, Constigan,

and O’Hara 2013). However, the library is mentioned only 10 times in the entire 92-page QAF document, where it is simply categorized for the most part as an “academic service” along with a host of other cross-campus support units (for example, computer services, co-op offices, and accessibility services) (OUCQA 2019, 45).

This study aims to investigate whether and how libraries and their services actually do feature in academic program reviews as well as to consider ways of increasing their visibility in the review process as a step towards facilitating more deliberate and recognized contributions by librarians to continuous program enhancement. More specifically, using an empirical corpus-based approach, we investigate librarians’ contributions to academic program reviews by analyzing the series of documents that are created as part of the review process. For this study, we examined the review documents that were produced during the cyclical program reviews for a total of 10 graduate programs in the social sciences and humanities offered by two Canadian universities in Ontario, which have different institutional profiles.<sup>1</sup>

This study is divided into six main sections. We first provide background information about the province of Ontario’s QA process for academic programs as well as an institutional context for the universities featured in this study: the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University. Although this case study looks at two Ontario institutions, we believe that the findings are relevant to a wider audience since all publicly assisted Ontario universities have similar QA processes that are governed by the previously mentioned QAF, which was put in place by the OUCQA. Meanwhile, Canada’s other provinces have similarly rigorous QA processes for their institutes of higher education, so the implications of this study are broadly relevant across the country (Universities Canada 2019). Next, we summarize key points from the literature that address librarian involvement in program reviews. We then introduce the corpus analysis techniques that were used to investigate a corpus of program review documentation for the 10 programs (five per institution). For each program review, six different types of document are generated: the program’s self-study, the library report, the site visit itinerary, the reviewers’ report, the program response, and the final assessment report. The results of the analyses of each document type are presented for each institution, followed by a comparison and a more global discussion. The results of the analysis suggest that librarians are not highly visible as part of the academic program review process and that this is a missed opportunity for a university both to enhance its programs and to promote the library’s resources and services through the program review process. Finally, we consider possible reasons why librarians have a low profile in the cyclical review process and make some recommendations for how their visibility could be raised.

### **Background and institutional contexts**

The importance of QA in higher education has been recognized around the world, and there are many discussions of institutional QA processes that have been implemented to review academic programs in Canada (Baker and Miosi

2010; Weinrib and Jones 2014) and elsewhere (for example, Yamamoto 2009; Eklund 2013; Cardoso et al. 2017; Kakembo and Makumbi Barymak 2017). In Canada, public education falls under the mandate of the provincial and territorial governments. In the province of Ontario, the importance of university QA has been increasing over the past 50 years (Goff 2013), as it has been in other parts of the country, such as Alberta (Oloo 2010) and Quebec (Lacroix and Maheu 2012). Initially focused largely on accountability and compliance, QA has undergone, in principle, a shift, with increasing emphasis now being placed on program enhancement and developing a culture of continuous improvement. This point is worth mentioning briefly for two main reasons. First, while much of the recent QA literature emphasizes the benefits of employing QA for program enhancement (for example, Elassy 2015; Williams 2016), there is nonetheless considerable evidence to suggest that faculty members whose programs are being assessed still tend to view QA as primarily an accountability and compliance exercise (for example, Bowker 2016; Manatos, Rosa, and Sarrico 2017; Cardoso, Rosa, and Videira 2018). Second, it is in the context of this shift in perspective, where the emphasis is on program enhancement, that there is scope to involve librarians more extensively in areas such as curriculum development and instruction.

As part of this new orientation towards continuous improvement, the OUCQA was formed, and, by 2010, a QAF was introduced and adopted by all publicly assisted universities in Ontario. This QAF is revised periodically, most recently in March 2019 (OUCQA 2019). The tension between the two approaches to QA and the challenge of striking the right balance comes out clearly in the introduction of the QAF, which states:

Care has been taken in developing the new Quality Assurance Framework for Ontario universities to balance the need for accountability with the need to encourage normal curricular evolution. In particular, if quality assurance measures become too onerous or restrictive, they can become impediments rather than facilitators of continuous program improvements. Ontario universities have kept this issue in mind in order to produce a Quality Assurance Framework that supports innovation and improvement while cultivating a culture of transparency and accountability—i.e., quality *assurance* that produces quality *enhancement*. (OUCQA 2019, 1; emphasis in original)

The OUCQA, which is responsible for the oversight of the QAF processes for Ontario universities, operates at arm's length from both Ontario's publicly assisted universities and the provincial government. Each publicly assisted Ontario university has developed its own Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) that aligns with the QAF, and, since 2011, these IQAPs have been used to guide the program review process (Liu 2015). To secure academic standards and to ensure continuous improvement, one of the components that must be part of the IQAP is a protocol for the cyclical review of each academic program at least once every eight years.

With specific regard to the library, as mentioned previously, the entire QAF document contains only 10 instances of the word “library/libraries.” Five of the 10 occurrences are found in lists of academic services such as the following:

Such services would typically include, but are not limited to, academic advising and counselling appropriate to the program, information technology, library and laboratory resources directed towards the program, and internship, co-operative education and practicum placement services. (OUCQA 2019, 3)

Meanwhile, four more instances are located in the sample final assessment reports that are provided as a model of what these reports could contain. However, we can see that these four occurrences of “library” consist of little more than a passing mention, which suggests to the future writers of such reports that the library need not be given a prominent role in a final assessment report:

The Review Team also had an opportunity to meet with a small group of employers of microbiology co-op students, and to visit the undergraduate laboratories, library, and the Co-operative Education offices. (32)

The reviewers visited the economics teaching and research facilities, library, and University Teaching and Learning Centre. (37)

The final occurrence appears as part of an instruction in the sample template for a reviewers’ report. The reviewers are asked to provide feedback on seven different evaluation criteria: (1) program objectives; (2) admission requirements; (3) curriculum; (4) teaching and assessment; (5) resources; (6) quality indicators; and (7) additional graduate program criteria. Within this template, the sole mention of the library occurs not in the curriculum or teaching and learning sections but, rather, in the section on resources, where again, the library is listed alongside other cross-campus services as one example of several options that could be considered by reviewers during their evaluation:

Comment on the appropriateness and effectiveness of academic services (e.g. library, co-op, technology, etc.) to support the program(s) being reviewed. (43)

Overall then, it is clear that the QAF does not foresee a prominent role for libraries or librarians as part of the cyclical review of academic programs. When libraries are mentioned, the physical aspect is often emphasized (that is, a library is a place to visit). Meanwhile, the actual or potential contribution of libraries or librarians to aspects of curriculum and instruction—two areas that come out as being the primary focus points of the QAF overall—are not overtly suggested as contributions that reviewers might want to consider or assess.

### *University of Ottawa*

As a member of the U-15 Group of Canadian Research Universities, the University of Ottawa (2016) is a large bilingual (English-French) research-intensive university offering a wide variety of academic programs taught by 1,250 academic staff and administered by nine faculties (Arts, Education, Engineering, Health Sciences, Law, Management, Medicine, Science, Social Sciences). There are nearly 200 graduate programs and approximately 6,500 graduate students. The university’s most recent strategic plan identifies “research excellence” as one of its four strategic goals, noting that “advances in knowledge and research go

hand in hand with growth at the graduate studies level” (University of Ottawa 2014, 5). To support the goal of research excellence, the university will “continue to increase enrolment of top ranked graduate students, with a target of 16% of our total student body by 2015, and 18% by 2020” and “build a world-class library and core facilities to support a world-class research university” (6). The university therefore clearly views strong connections between research excellence, graduate studies, and library support. Indeed, faculty and students are supported by 37 librarians as well as other library staff. With regard to the collection, the library contains just under 4 million books (printed and electronic), slightly fewer than 125,000 e-journals, and a generous selection of other resources (for example, videos, maps, and microforms). The library also offers a diverse array of tours and seminars as well as workshops that relate clearly to the QAF’s recommended assessment criteria that focus on curriculum and instruction (for example, citation management, information literacy, copyright instruction, and data management for graduate students) (University of Ottawa Library 2019).

### *Saint Paul University*

Saint Paul University is a small bilingual (English-French) Catholic Pontifical university located in Ottawa whose primary focus is on the multiple facets of the human experience. At the graduate level, Saint Paul University offers seven programs administered by four faculties (Canon Law, Human Sciences, Philosophy, and Theology). Saint Paul University’s (2016) graduate student population is 315, and the total number of professors is 69. Though it has a strong focus on undergraduate education, Saint Paul University is nonetheless committed to providing a quality experience for graduate students and researchers, and it views the library as playing a key role in this endeavour. For instance, the university’s most recent strategic plan states: “To remain relevant, every program of study must be backed by top-quality research, and in this context, Saint Paul University aims to be a world leader in its areas of specialization” (Saint Paul University 2014). Meanwhile, when discussing the commitment of Saint Paul University to education and research, the strategic plan notes: “The Saint Paul University Library, the most prestigious theological and canon law library in Canada, must meet the needs of the entire student population and faculty” (Saint Paul University 2014). The Saint Paul University Library (2019) is operated by three librarians in addition to several support staff. With regard to the collection, the library contains approximately 520,000 books and 1,100 periodicals as well as 100,000 microforms. With regard to assistance, the university organizes workshops to help patrons make effective use of the resources, and librarians are available by appointment to provide one-on-one support for researchers.

### *Relationship between the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University*

Since 1965, Saint Paul University has been federated with the University of Ottawa. As described by McDonald (2016, 12), federation and affiliation agreements between universities are relatively common in Canada and reflect this

country's history: in the nineteenth century, higher education was frequently an initiative of religious groups, but, over time, these denominational institutions joined forces with secular, publicly funded universities to enhance their credibility and sustainability. As McDonald goes on to note, federated and affiliated colleges offer distinct missions and a small campus feel, along with the benefits of their larger partner universities (12). Regarding the relationship between Saint Paul University and the University of Ottawa, Saint Paul University has its own Senate and, in addition to conferring its own degrees, it may present its candidates to the Senate of the University of Ottawa for the joint conferment of its certificates, diplomas, and civil degrees. Both universities consider themselves to be complementary institutions, and, while they maintain independent libraries, the students and faculty at each university enjoy library access at both. Another activity entered into collaboratively by the two institutions is the abovementioned IQAP for the cyclical review of graduate-level academic programs. Because these two institutions manage their own academic programs and libraries, yet follow the same high-level IQAP for graduate program review, we are presented with an interesting opportunity to observe and compare how these two universities, with their very different profiles, incorporate librarians into the cyclical program review process for graduate programs. For instance, on the one hand, it is possible that, in a large and well-resourced research-intensive university, a high value could be placed on the range of library services that support graduate-level instruction. On the other hand, in a more intimate setting, there could be a naturally closer collaboration between academic units and the library.

#### *Overview of the cyclical program review process for graduate programs*

At both the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University, the graduate program review process begins with the drafting of a detailed self-study prepared by the academic unit delivering the program. The self-study gives a comprehensive presentation of the program's objectives, learning outcomes, curriculum, admission criteria, faculty members, student body, governance and administration, and resources and services, among other information. Once completed, a typical self-study report is approximately 80–100 pages in length, often with additional appendices. The self-study is sent to three reviewers, who later come to the campus for a site visit where they meet various program stakeholders. The reviewers submit a report identifying the program's strengths and weaknesses and also make recommendations for its enhancement. The academic program then responds to the reviewers' report. Finally, these three key documents—the self-study, the reviewers' report, and the program's response—are considered by the Graduate Program Evaluation Committee (GPEC), which is composed of faculty members from both the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University. Following an analysis of these materials, the GPEC produces a fourth report known as the final assessment report, which contains a determination with regard to a program's quality, specifies any necessary improvements, and reports the results back to the OUCQA.

Although the strategic plans of both the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University underline the importance of the library for supporting high-quality research and graduate studies, the requirements set out in the IQAP regarding libraries are minimal. It is stated simply that the self-study must provide “evidence that there are adequate resources to sustain graduate students’ scholarship and research activities, including library support, information technology support, and laboratory access” (University of Ottawa 2011, section 6.1.3.5(c)). In fact, this wording is taken directly from the QAF, and similar wording appears in the IQAPs of universities across Ontario (for example, Algonia University, McMaster University, Nipissing University, Queens University, Ryerson University, Trent University, University of Guelph, University of Waterloo, and University of Western Ontario). Meanwhile, a wider literature search reveals that Ontario universities are not unique in having minimally specified requirements for library contributions to program reviews (for example, Salvesen 2006; Mercer and Maciel 2012; Jackson 2017).

**Librarians, faculty, and academic program reviews:  
a brief literature review**

It was noted in the introductory section that if we agree that a main function of academic libraries is to improve the quality of studying and research, then academic librarians have the potential to make a strong contribution to overall program enhancement and, by extension, to play a more prominent role in the program review process. However, there have been relatively few studies that investigate the librarian’s role in program reviews. A quarter century ago, Kuo (1992, 5) published a report for Ball State University Libraries noting that “literature on how libraries support academic program reviews and accreditation visits is scarce.” Two decades later, the situation had not changed substantially, as Costella et al. (2013, 16) indicate that, while “library support has always been recognized to some extent in the assessment of academic programs and institutions . . . involvement [of librarians] was often inconsistent and not well defined.” Of particular interest are their observations that, although there is abundant evidence about why academic libraries need to accommodate institutional program review requirements, the literature offers considerably less evidence describing and operationalizing the role of academic libraries in these reviews (5).

Of the few studies that have been conducted, most focus on the perspective of librarians, who often view faculty practices and attitudes as significant barriers to their participation. Gregory (1990) conducted an early investigation into the academic library’s role in the new academic program proposal process in six different US states. Gregory argues that for any state-level review process to be effective, a major consideration should be whether the library of the institution seeking to establish a new program has resources adequate to support the program in question. While Gregory finds that the level of participation of librarians in the new program review process varies, she notes that “substantial improvement in the procedures could be made in all of the states studied. . . . Otherwise, state-level program review takes on the character of a mere charade, conducted

solely for the purpose of checking off all of the required boxes on the bureaucratic form” (134).

Unfortunately, as reported by Wu and Senior (2016), the situation has not improved much in the past quarter century. The findings of their extensive survey of US-based academic business librarians reveal that many librarians perceive their participation to be “often a mere formality and an afterthought,” noting that in the opinion of the librarians surveyed: “Most of the time, teaching faculty wait until the whole proposal is already crafted to contact the library. The implied expectation is for the librarian to provide an affirmative statement that ‘library resources are adequate’” (115). Although more than 60 per cent of the 75 librarians who responded to their survey feel that librarians should play a part in the review process, over 65 per cent of respondents indicate that they were never involved (119). In follow-up interviews with nine librarians, a common theme that emerged is that, when librarians do try to participate actively in the review process, “anything from the library is considered pro forma and never really taken seriously” (121). Meanwhile, in a similar vein, White (1999) surveyed academic business librarians to explore their perceptions on issues related to the professional accreditation process for business administration programs in the United States. Of the 77 respondents, only 7 per cent report being very involved in the accreditation review process. Meanwhile, 27 per cent indicate that they had not been involved in the review process at all, and the explanation they gave was that they had not been invited to participate or that their offer to do so was rejected by the academic unit.

Given and Julien (2005, 26) observe that “forging and maintaining strong working relationships between faculty and librarians is no easy task,” owing to misperceptions about different work roles and misinterpretations of motivations, among other factors. There is abundant literature documenting the challenges of attaining productive collaboration between these two groups (for example, Christiansen, Stompler, and Thaxton 2004; Phelps and Campbell 2012; Pham and Tanner 2015). For instance, Stahl (1997) provides a faculty member’s opinion in a piece entitled “What I Want in a Librarian,” suggesting that faculty are seeking librarians who are proactive but who also know when to take a step back, who clearly communicate the limitations of librarian support for research activities, who seek faculty input on collection development, and who provide information on new and useful resources within the library. Meanwhile, Larson (1998), a reference librarian, responds with a piece entitled: “What I Want in a Faculty Member,” and her list includes recognition from faculty that librarians are in the same business of serving students’ needs, clear communication with librarians about course objectives, a basic familiarity with the literature and research tools in the faculty members’ discipline, and the involvement of librarians in the design of course assessments so that they match available library resources. Though somewhat dated, these companion pieces illustrate the complexities and emotions surrounding the working relationships between librarians and faculty. More recent literature suggests that these two groups are still struggling to achieve productive collaborative relationships in a number of areas,

including collection development (Shen 2012), information literacy instruction (Sterling Brasley 2008), and academic program reviews (Wu and Senior 2016), though there are also some encouraging examples that point to the possibility of library and teaching faculty working together successfully, such as Sciammarella's (2009) report on how these two groups joined forces to combat plagiarism among students.

Meanwhile, in recent years, a wealth of literature has sprung up in which numerous scholars have determined that faculty members around the world are not thrilled about participating in higher education QA efforts such as cyclical program reviews (for example, Jones and de Saram 2005; Anderson 2006; Huusko and Ursin 2010; Bowker 2016). For instance, Manatos, Rosa, and Sarico (2017, 164–65) summarize that many faculty are resistant to program evaluation measures for various reasons, including seeing QA activities as a means to control their work rather than to improve it; seeing QA activities as a bureaucratic and time-consuming burden that distracts faculty from their core job of teaching and research; seeing the QA system as an inflexible system that faculty are required to serve rather than the other way around; and having a lack of understanding about the true goals of the QA system, which are perceived as being poorly communicated by upper management. Cardoso, Rosa, and Videira (2018) argue that, as a result, many faculty members still view QA through the lens of accountability and compliance rather than through the lens of program enhancement or a culture of continuous improvement (see also Cardoso et al. 2019). Accordingly, rather than feeling empowered or responsible, they tend not to feel any ownership of the QA process and therefore become disengaged and assume the role of passive recipients of QA. Therefore, it would seem that, before librarians can hope to build productive partnerships with faculty members as part of the QA process, those faculty members would first need to be convinced of the value and benefits of engaging in the QA process in general. If faculty are currently viewing QA as a tick-box process to be endured and gotten through as quickly as possible, then it is not surprising that they are not seeking to build teams or engage in meaningful discussions as part of the process.

With regard to the type of library-related features that are typically evaluated as part of academic program reviews, Weiner (2009, 4) suggests that library collection measures are no longer sufficient to describe the value of the library to a program, and she emphasizes that “the focus of the contemporary academic library is to be an active learning center rather than simply a repository for books and journals” (4). Weiner goes on to note that “in addition, the increased utilization of electronic resources implies that traditional measures of library function (i.e., collection size) could be less important” (4). In a similar vein, Jackson (2017, 91) suggests that how program quality measures are developed reveals a great deal about value constructs: “Of the many elements that contribute to university quality, those that are expected to have the largest impact on institutional missions are and should be assessed in greater detail.” Nevertheless, with specific regard to the library, Jackson goes on to observe that traditional library metrics, including those related to collections, use, and spaces, continue to play a

prominent role in these evaluations, in spite of the fact that what libraries actually do has shifted beyond the provision of research materials and study spaces to include teaching and research, along with a suite of additional services such as scholarly communications and research data management, which may be relevant to graduate students in research programs (91). As Jackson emphasizes, many of these are now seen as core functions of the library rather than as value-added services; therefore, it should follow that these are also considered during reviews of programs to which they are pertinent (91).

Salvesen (2006, n.p.; emphasis added) describes the new Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT, in Norwegian), which oversees QA in higher education and investigates “what role library services play in NOKUT’s QA and accreditation systems—and not least, what role they *could* play,” concluding that library-related guidelines are outdated. For example, the criteria state that the institute must have a satisfactory academic library in the form of suitable locations with workplaces, modern technology, and competent staff as well as having easily accessible relevant digital and analogue collections and/or services for students and faculty. However, there is no focus on new services, such as digital institutional open-access publications, information literacy teaching, or learning centres, which Salvesen sees as a missed opportunity for promoting program quality. Nicholson, Thomas, and Stephenson (2011) make similar observations about Ontario’s QAF, suggesting that it is time to shift away from predominantly descriptive and collection-focused library reports to ones that use data to provide evidence of broader library support for quality scholarship (for example, consultation, instruction, and assistance services). Respondents to Mercer and Maciel’s (2012) survey of 41 libraries that belong to the Association of Research Libraries also feel that questions asked by accrediting agencies seem out of date with current service models.

Overall, the picture emerging from the literature is of a situation where there is room for greater recognition of librarians’ contribution to program quality as well as improved collaboration between faculty members and academic librarians as part of the program review process. However, thus far, this picture is presented mainly from the perspective of librarians. Moreover, it is based largely on indirect evidence, such as surveys and interviews with librarians, who relay their perception that faculty attitudes are a major barrier to their participation. This article aims to further explore the question of librarian involvement in program reviews using an empirical and objective corpus-based approach to investigate the documentation that has been created as part of the program review process at the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University, two Ontario universities that have different profiles.

### **Corpus and methodology**

This project employs a corpus-based methodology. In this section, we introduce the corpus and describe the corpus analysis tool that was used as well as the steps taken to investigate the corpus. For the purpose of this study, we

Table 1. Selected graduate programs in the Faculties of Social Sciences and Humanities that are offered at the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University and that have completed a cyclical program review between 2011 and 2016 as part of the institutional quality assurance process

Institution	University of Ottawa	Saint Paul University
<b>Programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MA, PhD in Criminology</li> <li>• MA, PhD in Political Science</li> <li>• MA, PhD in Public Administration</li> <li>• MA in Public and International Affairs</li> <li>• MA, PhD in Religious Studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MA, PhD in Canon Law</li> <li>• MA, PhD in Conflict Studies</li> <li>• MA, PhD in Counselling and Spirituality</li> <li>• MA in Public Ethics</li> <li>• MA, PhD in Theology</li> </ul>

were granted access to five years' worth of program review documents for programs at the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University; this five-year period begins in July 2011, when the new IQAP was introduced, and goes until June 2016. As described above, Saint Paul University is a smaller institution whose primary focus is on the multiple facets of the human experience. Saint Paul University offers a total of seven graduate programs, five of which were reviewed as part of the cyclical review process between 2011 and 2016. Therefore, the review documents associated with these five graduate programs have been used to create the Saint Paul University corpus. Meanwhile, the University of Ottawa is a much larger institution, offering a wider range of graduate programs across nine faculties. In order to facilitate a comparison with Saint Paul University, we selected the five most comparable University of Ottawa graduate programs offered by the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences from among the 14 programs that were reviewed during the same period. The five programs from each university are summarized in table 1. The program review documentation for these 10 programs forms the corpus for the present study.

For each of the 10 graduate programs, six key pieces of program review documentation were examined:

1. Self-study prepared by the academic program (that is, faculty, staff, students);
2. Library report prepared by an academic librarian and included as an appendix to the self-study;
3. Itinerary for the site visit by external reviewers;
4. Reviewers' report prepared by faculty members who are disciplinary experts from outside the university;
5. Academic program's response to the reviewers' report;
6. Final assessment report produced by the Graduate Program Evaluation Committee (made up of professors from both the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University) and submitted to the OUCQA.

The documents in the corpus were examined with the help of corpus analysis software known as WordSmith Tools (Scott 2017). Bowker (2018a) provides a detailed description of how corpus-based techniques can be effectively applied in library and information science research. For the present study, two basic types of analyses were conducted: qualitative analyses, such as examining sections of the

Set	Tag	Word #	Set	Set	Word	Set	Set	Word	Set	Set
1		5,278	25	96	0	96	0	91		
2		2,846	10	47	0	52	0	49		
3		424	16	23	0	8%	0	7%		
4		415	15	56	0	8%	0	7%		
5		437	17	11	0	8%	0	7%		
6		2,506	80	46	0	45	0	43		
7		2,523	82	53	0	46	0	43		
8		2,479	77	10	0	45	0	43		
9		2,815	10	41	0	51	0	48		
10		3,412	14	81	0	62	0	59		
11		3,177	12	78	0	58	0	55		
12		4,018	19	63	0	73	0	69		
13		5,435	25	63	0	98	0	93		
14		5,502	26	30	0	10	0	94		
15		3,135	12	90	0	57	0	54		

Figure 1. A screenshot of a KWIC concordance for the term “library” generated using the WordSmith Tools concordancer

documents that discuss library-related issues to identify themes, and quantitative analyses, such as calculating the total percentage of each document that was devoted to discussing library topics.

One feature of WordSmith is the concordancer, which permits users to search for, and display, key words in context (KWIC). A sample of a KWIC display can be seen in figure 1. To identify sections of the documents that contained discussions of library-related topics, we began by using the search terms “librar\*” and “biblioth\*.”<sup>2</sup> Next, we examined the retrieved occurrences of these words in their surrounding context (for example, sentences or paragraphs) to identify other terms that were being used as part of these discussions. Examples of additional terms that were identified include: “audiovisual resources,” “catalogue,” “collection,” “databases,” “indexes,” “journals,” “libguide,” “literature search,” “reference desk,” “research articles,” and “Web of Science.” Using these search terms, further searches were conducted to retrieve additional contexts, and, within these contexts, more new terms were identified. We continued examining the documents in this iterative fashion until we felt confident that we had identified all of the sections of each document that contained a discussion of library-related issues. Next, we calculated the percentage of each document that was devoted to these library discussions. This was done by first determining each document’s total word count and then counting the number of words in the sentences/paragraphs about libraries and expressing this as a percentage of the overall content.

## Findings

In this section, we will summarize and discuss our findings for each of the six program review document types at each of the two institutions (University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University), before proceeding to a comparative and more global discussion. The categories of documents are discussed in the order in which they were produced as part of the cyclical program review process outlined above: self-studies, library reports, site visit itineraries, external reviewers’ reports, academic program responses, and final assessment reports.

### Self-studies

As previously noted, the first step in the graduate program review process is the preparation of a detailed self-study by the academic unit that delivers the program. At both the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University, a very basic template is provided to guide the initial development of the self-study. However, in recognition of the fact that graduate programs may differ significantly from one another, customization and elaboration of the template is permitted, and, thus, stakeholders have considerably flexibility in presenting their program. Once completed, the main body of a self-study report is typically between 80 and 100 pages in length, and additional material may be provided in an appendix.

As summarized in table 2, we calculated the total number of words for each of the 10 self-study documents as well as the number of words found in sections that discussed library-related topics.<sup>3</sup> We can see that the length of the self-studies varies considerably at both institutions. At the University of Ottawa, the shortest is just over 21,000 words, while the longest is more than one-third longer at approximately 33,000 words. The average length of a self-study document at the University of Ottawa is 28,746 words. Similarly, at Saint Paul University, the shortest self-study is approximately 19,500 words, while the longest is more than 31,000 words, and the average is 24,429 words. Meanwhile, as illustrated in table 2, the percentage of the content that focuses on library-related matters in each of these documents is extremely small. At the University of Ottawa, it is less than 1 per cent in all five of the self-studies. For the Saint Paul University documents, it is between 1 per cent and 2 per cent in all cases, with an average of 1.34 per cent. Though still small, this is more than double the percentage of space that is accorded to library discussions in the University of Ottawa self-studies, where the average is just 0.52 per cent.

Each of the 10 self-studies contains a section entitled “Library,” which appears in the template provided by the QA office. It is worth pointing out that

Table 2. The word count and percentage of each self-study that discusses library issues

Program	Total word count	Word count of discussions about libraries	Percentage of self-study focusing on libraries (%)
<b>University of Ottawa</b>			
Criminology	33,022	158	0.48
Political science	31,444	133	0.42
Public administration	28,729	132	0.46
Public and international affairs	29,072	75	0.26
Religious studies	21,461	206	0.96
<b>Average</b>	<b>28,746</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>0.52</b>
<b>Saint Paul University</b>			
Canon law	24,032	330	1.37
Conflict studies	23,847	413	1.73
Counselling and spirituality	23,212	253	1.09
Public ethics	19,595	278	1.42
Theology	31,461	347	1.10
<b>Average</b>	<b>24,429</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>1.34</b>



this “Library” section is found within a larger section called “Physical resources and financial support,” which would seem to reinforce the idea that a library is a place where resources are stored rather than one where services are offered. It is also noteworthy that the template contains other sections where discussions about library-related matters could have been incorporated, such as the section labelled “Academic services at the university level that contribute to academic quality of programs,” which would seem to be more in keeping with the QAF categorization of the library as an “Academic service.” Meanwhile, services that were discussed in the “Academic Services” section include the Academic Writing Help Centre, the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (a second-language learning unit that provides help for students navigating the bilingual institutions of the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University), and the Student Academic Success Service, whose mandate includes academic accommodations.

Four of the University of Ottawa self-studies contain a single paragraph in the “Library” section, while the fifth self-study contains just two paragraphs. The main points of discussion include the library’s hours of operation, an overview of the workspaces available (for example, study carrels), a mention of the reference desk, and very high-level descriptions of the journals and databases available. These very brief sections in each of the five self-studies also invite the reader to consult the library report contained in an appendix. In total, there are 13 additional references to library-related topics scattered throughout the other sections of the five University of Ottawa self-studies, with three being the highest number of additional references appearing in any one self-study. On the whole, discussions of the library are not well integrated into, or woven throughout, the broader description of an academic program as part of the University of Ottawa self-studies; most mentions of the library outside of the “Library” section consist of a single sentence or a simple cross-reference back to that section or to the appendix that contains the library report. Moreover, when the library is discussed, it is typically with regard to its contents or spaces—catalogue, collection, databases, indexes, journals, research articles, and study carrels—and only rarely do these discussions touch on librarians or library services, such as reference services or relevant workshops (for example, citation management, information literacy, or copyright instruction).

The library does not fare much better in the self-studies produced for the programs at Saint Paul University, where there are a total of just 10 additional references to the library outside of the “Library” section. However, it must be noted that the shortest library section in a Saint Paul University self-study (253 words) is longer than the longest one found in a University of Ottawa self-study (206 words). Meanwhile, the average length of the “Library” section in the Saint Paul University self-studies is nearly 2.5 times as long as the average length found in the University of Ottawa self-studies (324 words versus 141 words). Although the discussions pertaining to library-related topics account for a somewhat greater percentage of the overall document at Saint Paul University, the focus of these discussions still tends to be on physical resources.

Once again, readers are referred to the appendix containing the library report to obtain more details.

### *Library reports*

The library reports are authored by academic librarians from each of the respective institutions and are appended to the self-study documents. The five library reports for programs at the University of Ottawa were prepared by four different librarians, and as the data in table 3 reveal, some librarians provide much more detail than others: the shortest report is 2,262 words, while the longest is approaching three times that length, with the average length of a University of Ottawa library report being just under 4,000 words.

Meanwhile, for the programs at Saint Paul University, the library reports were prepared by two different librarians and were somewhat shorter. All contained fewer than 2,000 words, with the average being 1,874 words. In examining the content, it is clear that the Saint Paul University reports are shorter because the collection, spaces, and range of services offered by the smaller Saint Paul University library are less extensive than those at the much larger University of Ottawa library and can therefore be described more succinctly.

In examining the content of the library reports in more detail, we can see that, in all cases, the librarians tailored the reports to include program-specific information. In addition, in all of the reports at both institutions, descriptions of library services are given greater attention in the library reports than they are in the self-studies, the latter of which focus primarily on the library's collections and spaces. This suggests that librarians are fully aware of, and are seeking to emphasize, the added value that their services—both traditional (for example, reference) and non-traditional (for example, information literacy, copyright support, research data management)—bring to the delivery of quality graduate programs, even if the academic units do not appear to be aware of this information or at least do not explicitly seek to share it with external reviewers.

Table 3. Word count and authorship of library report appendices

Program	Total word count of library report (appended to self-study)	Librarian who prepared report
<b>University of Ottawa</b>		
Criminology	2,352	Librarian UO-A
Political science	3,187	Librarian UO-B
Public administration	2,262	Librarian UO-B
Public and international affairs	5,579	Librarian UO-C
Religious studies	5,788	Librarian UO-D
<b>Average</b>	<b>3,834</b>	
<b>Saint Paul University</b>		
Canon law	1,845	Librarian SPU-A
Conflict studies	1,792	Librarian SPU-B
Counselling and spirituality	1,856	Librarian SPU-A
Public ethics	1,991	Librarian SPU-A
Theology	1,888	Librarian SPU-A
<b>Average</b>	<b>1,874</b>	



*Itineraries*

Each graduate program evaluation requires a site visit by external reviewers who are faculty experts in the subject matter covered by the program. Typically, a site visit takes place over two business days. The itineraries for the 10 site visits were examined in order to determine whether the external reviewers toured the library and/or met with a librarian and, if so, for what length of time. The results are presented in table 4. In reviewing the itineraries, we can see that at University of Ottawa, only one of the five itineraries included a tour and meeting with the librarian, while, at Saint Paul University, the opposite occurred in that only one of the five itineraries did not include a library visit. In all cases, these tours/meetings were scheduled for 30 minutes, with the exception of the theology program at Saint Paul University, where a full hour was allotted. This means that, in 80 per cent of program review site visits at University of Ottawa and 20 per cent of the site visits at Saint Paul University, the reviewers received information about the library from someone other than a librarian, if at all. This is potentially disconcerting if we consider that, based on the self-study content, the type of information that faculty seem to know about the library concerns mainly the spaces and the collection coverage.

*Reviewers' reports*

Following the site visit, the reviewers collectively prepare a report in which they share their observations about the program's strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations for its improvement. Reviewers' are not required to follow a template, but they are asked to keep at least the following four points in mind when carrying out the evaluation and preparing their report:

- Does the program have the resources necessary to deliver a good quality program and to offer a positive student experience?
- Does the program make sense within the overall context of the discipline and will the program's graduates meet disciplinary expectations?
- Does the program have any particular strengths or distinguishing characteristics?

Table 4. Information regarding the inclusion of libraries and librarians in the site visits

Program	Tour of the library	Meeting with librarian	Duration
<b>University of Ottawa</b>			
Criminology	no	no	N/A
Political Science	no	no	N/A
Public Administration	no	no	N/A
Public and International Affairs	no	no	N/A
Religious Studies	yes	yes	30 minutes
<b>Saint Paul University</b>			
Canon Law	yes	yes	30 minutes
Conflict Studies	yes	yes	30 minutes
Counselling and Spirituality	no	no	N/A
Public Ethics	yes	yes	30 minutes
Theology	yes	yes	60 minutes

- Does the program have a reasonable and adequate plan to address any perceived shortcomings?

As illustrated in table 5, we calculated the total number of words in each of the reviewers' reports as well as the number of words found in the sections that discussed library topics. For the University of Ottawa programs, the reviewers' reports range in length from 5,581 words to 7,229 words, with an average length of 6,405 words. Of the five reports, three contain at least some mention of libraries. On average, the percentage of the reviewers' reports that are devoted to discussing library issues at the University of Ottawa is just under 0.7 per cent.

Meanwhile, for the programs at Saint Paul University, the reviewers' reports are somewhat shorter, ranging from a low of 2,238 words to a high of 5,128 words, with an average word count of 3,710. However, four of the five reports do discuss library topics, and the average amount of space given to these discussions is much higher at 3.2 per cent. Indeed, for two of the Saint Paul University programs, it was over 6 per cent.

In examining the reports received from the reviewers of the University of Ottawa programs, we can see that, of the three reports that did mention the library, two mentioned it only briefly with a remark to the effect that no concerns had been raised by the program stakeholders with regard to the library collection or services. This suggests that the reviewers may be merely passing on comments made by students and faculty rather than coming to their own conclusions about the appropriateness of the library's contribution to program quality. Meanwhile, in the other report, the reviewers relayed a specific concern, noting that "the collection at the University of Ottawa has focused on Judaeo-Christian traditions and so work must be done to augment other areas."

Table 5. The word count and percentage of each reviewers' report that discusses library issues

Program	Total word count	Word count of discussions about libraries	Percentage of reviewers' report focusing on libraries (%)
<b>University of Ottawa</b>			
Criminology	5,984	0	0
Political Science	5,581	0	0
Public Administration	6,568	18	0.27
Public and International Affairs	6,663	36	0.54
Religious Studies	7,229	169	2.34
<b>Average</b>	<b>6,405</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>0.70</b>
<b>Saint Paul University</b>			
Canon Law	2,905	177	6.09
Conflict Studies	5,128	154	3.00
Counselling and Spirituality	2,970	0	0
Public Ethics	5,309	93	1.75
Theology	2,238	173	7.73
<b>Average</b>	<b>3,710</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>3.20</b>

With regard to the reports from the reviewers of the programs at Saint Paul University, one report does not mention the library at all, while the other four do. The comments raise both challenges and strengths. Among the challenges for the Saint Paul University Library, the reviewers note the following points and, in some cases, recommend ameliorations:

- *“One significant issue, however, that has arisen with the development of on-line instruction is that many of the resources are only available in the library, and are not available on-line. Other than two or three (English language) journals, none of the others are available in this format, and thus students who may be pursuing the course (s) on-line may be deprived of some significant sources which would be unavailable to them in any electronic format.”*
- *“L’offre de livres de la bibliothèque de l’Université St-Paul ne permet pas actuellement de répondre totalement aux besoins en recherche des étudiants du programme. Lors de notre visite de la bibliothèque, le bibliothécaire nous faisait part de la possibilité d’établir à peu de frais un service quotidien de livraison des livres réservés par les étudiants de l’USP à l’Université d’Ottawa. Cette proposition nous semble être très intéressante, car elle permettrait d’éliminer la distance entre les deux bibliothèques qui, si elle n’est pas un problème pour tous les étudiants de l’USP, semble l’être pour certains d’entre eux.”*
- *“La bibliothèque paraît cependant souffrir d’un manque de personnel, ainsi que de ressources limitées ne lui permettant pas de d’exploiter pleinement des fonds en attente de traitement et de valorisation.”*
- *“The Jean-Léon Allie Library of St Paul University is a strong center offering rich up-to-date access to material in physical and virtual form. However, we recommend that theses and Research Papers be made accessible in online format.”*

Meanwhile, in four of the reports, the reviewers also draw specific attention to positive aspects of the Saint Paul University library, including both the collection and the services. Excerpts of positive comments recorded in the reviewers’ reports include the following:

- *“The Library is jaw-dropping impressive, an envy of other theology libraries in Canada, and even perhaps in the world.”*
- *“Sur le plan des autres ressources, on soulignera que l’USP jouit d’une bibliothèque exceptionnelle en théologie, sûrement une des meilleures au Canada par l’ampleur de sa documentation.”*
- *“The library, in particular, is to be commended for its wide-ranging support of the entire academic program.”*
- *“The overall holdings, in terms of books and periodicals, electronic and paper, seem adequate for the program, and the graduate students and faculty were quite happy with the service offered by the library and its staff.”*

#### *Program responses*

Following receipt of the report from the reviewers, the academic program has an opportunity to respond to the reviewers’ report. As outlined in table 6, we have

calculated the length of the 10 response documents as well as the percentage of each document dedicated to discussing library topics. We can see rather dramatic differences in the lengths of the program responses. At the University of Ottawa, these range from a low of 2,332 words to a high of 4,338 words, with an average of 3,380 words. Only a single response document mentions the library, giving an average of just 0.12 per cent for the overall percentage of space that program responses dedicate to discussing library issues.

Meanwhile, at Saint Paul University, the shortest response document was just over 700 words, and the longest was more than three times that length, with the average coming in at 1,761 words. However, three of five response documents mention libraries, and the percentage of space devoted to these discussions represents an average of 1.53 per cent of the total response document.

In examining the response documents, it is clear that the programs focus most of their attention on responding to specific concerns or areas for improvement that have been identified by the reviewers. Therefore, given that only one specific library-related concern was raised for a University of Ottawa program, it is perhaps not surprising that only one of the program responses addresses library issues; this comment consisted of a simple statement that work was underway to expand the collection.

In examining the response documents from Saint Paul University, we see that three of the five contain a mention of the library. Where relevant, they indicate how they intend to address noted shortcomings, but, in all of the cases, they also take the time to reiterate the positive comments made by the reviewers, and, in some cases, they seek to capitalize on these by sending a message of their own to the higher administration:

- *“Les ressources de la bibliothèque pourront être mieux mises en valeur. Nous demandons qu’une plus grande importance leurs soit donnée dans les initiatives de publicité et de recrutement.”*

Table 6. The word count and percentage of each program response that discusses library issues

Program	Total word count of program response	Word count of discussions about libraries	Percentage of program response focusing on libraries (%)
<b>University of Ottawa</b>			
Criminology	4,338	0	0
Political Science	3,515	0	0
Public Administration	2,332	0	0
Public and International Affairs	2,993	0	0
Religious Studies	3,723	21	0.56
<b>Average</b>	<b>3,380</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0.12</b>
<b>Saint Paul University</b>			
Canon Law	783	48	6.13
Conflict Studies	2,433	0	0
Counselling and Spirituality	1,575	0	0
Public Ethics	2,208	36	1.63
Theology	1,808	52	2.88
<b>Average</b>	<b>1,761</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1.53</b>

*Final assessment reports*

The final assessment reports are produced by the members of the Graduate Program Evaluation Committee, which is composed of faculty members from the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University, after they have taken into consideration the self-study, the reviewers' report, and the program's response. The final assessment report contains just three sections: program strengths, areas for program enhancement, and specific recommendations for improvement (which include timelines and an indication of which authorities will oversee the implementation of the recommendations). As noted above, this document, which brings the internal review process to a close, is later sent to the OUCQA. As summarized in table 7, there is some variation in the length of the final assessment reports, but the average length is approximately 1,200 words for University of Ottawa programs and roughly 1,000 word for Saint Paul University programs.

With regard to the University of Ottawa programs, although some mention of libraries appeared in each of the five previous document types, none of the final assessment reports contain any mention of library topics, whether as strengths or as areas needing improvement. In contrast, two of the five final assessment reports produced for Saint Paul University programs did discuss library-related issues. In both cases, the library is singled out for special mention as one of the program's strengths. In addition, for one of these programs, it is recommended that the library—both its collection and its services—should feature more prominently in promotion and recruiting activities for the program.

**Discussion**

It was observed by Jackson (2017, 85) that “accreditation agencies want to see evidence of library capacity to support academic programs, but relatively few

Table 7. The total word count and number of words that discuss library issues in each final assessment report

Program	Total word count of final assessment reports	Word count of discussions about libraries	Percentage of final assessment reports focusing on libraries (%)
<b>University of Ottawa</b>			
Criminology	1,289	0	0
Political Science	1,052	0	0
Public Administration	1,300	0	0
Public and International Affairs	1,157	0	0
Religious Studies	1,172	0	0
<b>Average</b>	<b>1,194</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Saint Paul University</b>			
Canon Law	689	24	3.48
Conflict Studies	1,345	0	0
Counselling and Spirituality	863	0	0
Public Ethics	613	0	0
Theology	1,451	74	5.10
<b>Average</b>	<b>992</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2.02</b>

have substantially modified their written standards to reflect evolving notions of the library's impact (learning outcomes) or to require evidence of higher-level administrative activities (ongoing evaluation, data collection).” The same can be said of Ontario's QAF and of the QAF-based IQAP used by the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University to guide their program reviews. As noted previously, while the introduction of the QAF discusses the importance of continuous program enhancement, which would seem to open the door to more significant contributions from the library (and perhaps other services), this same document contains only a handful of passing mentions of the library, while, in the IQAP, the sole and rather vague requirement is for the program to provide evidence that there are adequate resources to sustain graduate students' scholarship and research activities, including library support.

There is something of a discord, then, between the generally stated QA aims of program enhancement, on the one hand, and the lack of guidance or examples in the QAF or IQAP that would prompt faculty, reviewers, or program evaluation committees to actively solicit, recognize, or recommend contributions from the library in this regard. As a result, it is not surprising that the data obtained from the self-studies at both the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University reveal that the faculty members who draft these documents make little effort to integrate a broad spectrum of information about the library in a meaningful way, tending to concentrate on sharing only a brief high-level description of the library's collection and spaces in a section focused on physical resources and then referring readers to an appendix for additional information. For the most part, these faculty members still appear to be treating the QA process as an accountability and compliance exercise rather than embracing the spirit of continuous improvement promoted in the opening pages of the QAF. What is more, the fact that these reviews are being deemed satisfactory even though there is little engagement with the library means that there is little incentive to invest in collaborations with librarians or to ensure that the library is discussed more prominently as part of the process.

In contrast to the bare-bones description of the library contained in the body of the self-study, the library reports that are appended to the self-studies for programs at both the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University are much richer. In both cases, the library reports are prepared by academic librarians, who not only give more specific details about the portions of the collection that are specifically pertinent to the program in question, but they also place a lot of emphasis on the value-added services that are offered by the library that can enhance the academic experience of students in the program. For instance, it is in the appendices that we learn about non-traditional library services, such as research data management and scholarly communication support for graduate programs. However, the problem is that the very nature of an appendix means that this information risks being overlooked because it is deemed to be supplemental rather than being considered important enough to be integrated into the body of the document. The relegation of detailed library-related information to an appendix lends weight to the observations made by Wu and Senior (2016,

115), for example, whose extensive survey of academic librarians reveals that librarians feel they are included in program reviews only as an afterthought. Whereas Jackson (2017, 85) generously gives the benefit of the doubt to academic units and reviewers, suggesting that, “undoubtedly, institutions themselves expand upon the library’s roles and responsibilities where appropriate within self-assessments, and these additional functions are surely considered by bodies conducting institutional evaluations,” we unfortunately did not find this to be the case for the cyclical review documents produced at the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University.

By discussing library services primarily in the appendix rather than in the main body of the self-study, the importance and visibility of these services are minimized, and programs miss out on opportunities to draw attention to how the library might support the learning objectives of the program or to promote value-added services that enhance their programs and the experiences of their students and faculty. Moreover, in the case of the University of Ottawa, where very few of the program reviews included a library tour or a meeting with a librarian, there is comparatively little mention of the library in the reviewers’ reports, which suggests that the reviewers did not pay much heed to the appendices, if they considered them at all. In contrast, 80 per cent of the site visits organized for the review of Saint Paul University programs did include a meeting with a librarian, and the Saint Paul University self-studies devoted a greater percentage of space to discussing library-related topics. Correspondingly, a greater proportion of the reviewers’ reports for Saint Paul University did discuss the library. Moreover, they did so in a way that suggests that the reviewers’ comments were based on their own observations rather than simply passing along the opinion of faculty or students. Not including librarians on the site visit schedules would seem to represent a missed opportunity for the library since the reviewers who met with librarians also tended to include a mention of the library services, rather than only of the physical resources, in their reports.

According to Weiner (2009, 4), it is desirable for the library to be recognized as a partner with other entities in the university in supporting the institutional mission, resulting in increased integration of the library. However, the findings of our study suggest that librarians have not truly attained the status of “partners” in the cyclical program review process at either the University of Ottawa or Saint Paul University, although they have fared marginally better at Saint Paul University. Overall, Saint Paul University has done a slightly better job of both devoting a greater percentage of space in the self-studies to library-related topics (1.34 per cent for Saint Paul University versus 0.52 per cent for University of Ottawa) and of including librarians in the site visits (80 per cent for Saint Paul University versus 20 per cent for the University of Ottawa), and this appears to have paid off in terms of helping the library maintain a slightly higher degree of visibility throughout the cyclical review. Nevertheless, there is still considerable room for improvement at both institutions given that the data in this study reveal an overall trend of diminished visibility for the library over

the course of the program review process. While all 10 of the program self-studies make at least some reference to library issues, and all 10 include a library report as an appendix, only half of the programs (one at the University of Ottawa and four at Saint Paul University) incorporate a meeting with a librarian on the itinerary. The library is then mentioned—either positively or as an area in need of improvement—in seven of the 10 reviewers' reports (three for the University of Ottawa and four for Saint Paul University), but in just four of the academic unit responses (one for the University of Ottawa and three for Saint Paul University). By the time the program review concludes with the final assessment report, only two mention the library (both for Saint Paul University programs); however, it is worth noting that both mentions are positive in nature, suggesting that it is worth making an effort to bring the value-added features of the library to the reviewers' attention.

#### *Considering faculty-librarian relations in the wider context of QA*

The data from the cyclical review documents at the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University would seem to confirm librarians' perceptions that they are not treated as significant partners in the academic program review process, even though a QA approach that purportedly seeks to promote program enhancement and continuous improvement would seem to allow for greater participation from colleagues such as librarians. As a next step, it is worth considering why this might be the case. Weiner (2009, 9) uses the construct of "boundary spanning" to describe those parts of the university, such as the library, that are campus-wide entities, noting that, in order to be effective, people who work in these boundary-spanning areas must create partnerships and form relationships with individuals or groups (for example, academic units). What might be preventing librarians from forming effective partnerships with faculty as part of the program evaluation process? The librarians who participated in the surveys conducted by White (1999) and Wu and Senior (2016) suggest that faculty attitudes towards librarians are the principal barrier to librarian participation in program reviews.

As noted previously, academic program reviews are not the only activity where librarians and faculty members struggle to develop and maintain strong working relationships. Challenges have been noted in other areas too, such as information literacy instruction and collection development. Given and Julien (2005) provide an excellent summary of causes of difficulties that arise between the two groups, including, for example, having an unclear understanding of each other's areas of expertise and a difference of opinion over which types of learning should take place inside or outside the classroom. However, to the best of our knowledge, no one has specifically investigated the challenges associated with librarian-faculty relations in the context of program reviews. Although White (1999) and Wu and Senior (2016) illustrate convincingly that librarians do feel marginalized in this process, they do not explore the perspective of faculty members. However, in our view, it is worth considering faculty attitudes to program QA in general as this may shed some light on why faculty members appear less

than welcoming when it comes to librarians' participation in program reviews. Although we have limited this particular study to a corpus-based investigation of the documents produced during the cyclical program review process, it would be an interesting and important future step to speak with faculty members and to investigate whether the underlying problem is actually a difficulty working with librarians or whether it could be a reluctance to engage fully with the QA process in the first place.

### **Recommendations**

Clearly, librarians cannot singlehandedly change faculty members' attitudes towards QA or program reviews. Nevertheless, there are some small steps that could be taken to try to increase the visibility of the library and to enable librarians to play a more meaningful role in the program review process. The recommendations outlined in table 8 could help librarians to achieve these goals. Of course, it is possible that faculty or administrators may resist the efforts of librarians in this regard. However, as we have seen, at least some of this resistance may be less directed at librarians and more at the QA process in general. As noted by Pham and Tanner (2015, 16), effective collaborative efforts between librarians and faculty "take time to achieve, as they involve the development of a personal relationship of mutual understanding and trust that must be nurtured through ongoing communication." It is therefore worth persisting with these efforts and continuing to shine a light on the important contribution that libraries and librarians make to program quality.

### **Concluding remarks**

Even though the library is regularly referred to as the heart of a university, our empirical corpus-based investigation confirms earlier perception-based studies that librarians are not treated as key players in academic program reviews. Before beginning this study, we were unsure whether the difference in the institutional profiles of the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University would influence the participation of librarians in program reviews. As it turned out, even though Saint Paul University did a slightly better job of making the library visible as part of the review process, neither institution made a significantly meaningful attempt to do so, suggesting that the core issue is not tied to an institution's size or research profile per se. Moreover, the present findings, coupled with some earlier findings reported in Bowker (2018b, 2018c), suggest that it is not rooted in differing disciplinary cultures either. A clear and significant factor contributing to the diminished role of librarians would seem to be that the QAF, along with the IQAPs that are aligned with it, do not intend for the library to have a central or prominent role, though whether this de-emphasis is by accident or design is less clear. Moreover, it is possible that faculty resistance to QA, in general, rather than to librarian involvement, in particular, is more of a barrier. Though relatively small scale, our study suggests that when librarians do manage to be involved (for example, during site visits), a richer and more accurate picture of the library's contribution to program quality is revealed and carried throughout the

Table 8. Recommendations to help librarians become more visible in the academic program review process

Recommendation	Comments
Advocate for changes to the QAF and IQAP that open the door for librarians to play a more prominent role in the spirit of continuous improvement	Librarians can certainly advocate for this, but other players, such as the vice-president academic, the QA office, and faculty, must be looped in to ensure that this message is heard by those in a position to effect these changes. IQAPs are periodically audited and revised, as is the QAF, so changes are possible if a solid case can be mounted.
Seek a champion for the library among senior academic leadership	Vice-deans or program directors are often responsible for managing key elements of the review process (for example, identifying team members who will draft self-studies, prepare itineraries, or coordinate responses to reviewers' reports).
Volunteer to sit on the Program Evaluation Committee as a resource person	Participating in such meetings will provide an opportunity to educate faculty members about the ways in which the library can support them and their students. Some faculty may not even be aware of all that the library has to offer.
Ask to be part of the team that prepares the self-study, not just the appendix	Richer discussions in the self-studies about the library's services as well as its resources will allow the program to promote its strengths more clearly and fully.
Advocate for a meeting with a librarian to be scheduled as part of the site visit	Programs should utilize their strongest resources at the right moments in the review process, and librarians are better able than faculty members to explain how the library supports the program and its stakeholders.
Ask for a copy of the results of the program evaluation	Often, there is no clear mechanism for informing librarians about the results of the program review at any stage. By seeing the review results, the librarians will be better able to provide targeted and enhanced support for programs.

review process. We therefore recommend that librarians continue to seek ways to increase their visibility and to participate more fully in the academic review process.

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## Notes

- 1 Ideally, we would have liked to obtain program review documents produced at other universities in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada as well. However, with the exception of the final reports, the majority of documents associated with the program review process are considered to be confidential and for internal use only. The other institutions that we approached were unwilling to share these documents, which they considered to contain sensitive information. Therefore, we have limited our study to just two universities, although we believe that the findings are relevant to a broader audience.
- 2 Note that because the University of Ottawa and Saint Paul University are officially bilingual universities, where both English and French have equal status as working languages, some of the documents were produced in English, some in French, and some in a mixture of both languages. Searches were therefore carried out in both languages.
- 3 Owing to the very small values for the library discussions, it was difficult to display this information graphically without using a log-based scale, which can be challenging to read. We therefore chose to present the information in tabular format.

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