



# MOTION REGARDING ACCESSIBLE LIBRARIES

2022-03-24

Submitted for: 2022-03-24

**Submitted to:** SSMU Legislative Council      **Document no.:** LEG-PUB-MOT-2022-03-24-004

**Moved by:** Leo Holton  
ASUS Councilor      **Current Status:**  FOR APPROVAL  
 APPROVED  
 POSTPONED  
 COMMITTED  
 NOT APPROVED

**Seconded by:** Nathaniel Saad  
Management Councilor

## Issue

COVID-19 has necessitated changes to library organization, including reduced space for eating and speaking. Meanwhile, many students remain in online classes and continue to bear the effects of more isolated day-to-day life on mental health. While libraries may return to close-to-normal by Fall 2022 semester, COVID-19 remains a part of our reality, and an assessment of library space use is needed to ensure that students will have enough space on campus to eat, converse, and participate in online lectures through possible restriction changes in the uncertain years to come.

## Background and Rationale

The issue of library accessibility has not been frequently discussed on SSMU this year. It has, however, been frequently brought up by SSMU constituents and has been the subject of continued work by the Library Improvement Fund Committee and the Accessibility Commissioner. In McGill libraries, spaces that were previously just enough to meet student needs for eating and socializing remain greatly reduced due to COVID-19. And the number of study rooms has remained constant while the need for space for students to take online classes and conferences has dramatically increased.

While university study spaces may return almost fully to normal in the fall, there is still a significant possibility that restrictions return. Whether they do or not, after several years in which accessibility has been centered on



COVID-safety, now is the time to factor other concerns into that equation, even as COVID-safety remains a priority.

A thorough assessment of current library space use by the Office of the VP University Affairs, with collaboration of the SSMU Senate Caucus, would be the most effective solution to this issue. Library funding from McGill remains constant across each year, and to focus on increasing funding would potentially be wasted effort. Additionally, the Library Improvement Committee’s mandate does not cover these consultations.

---

**Alignment with Mission**

The proposed motion clearly contributes to the SSMU’s mission of Service for its students, as it will strengthen the educational, social, and mental/physical health conditions of our members, as outlined in the SSMU Constitution.

---

**Consultations Completed**

Before bringing this motion to the floor, consultations were undertaken with Accessibility Commissioner Cuthbertson, VP University Affairs Downie, and Library Improvement Fund Commissioner Pineda.

---

**Risk Factors and Resource Implications**

This decision has few significant risk factors. One to consider is that this work, which focuses on how COVID-19 has affected accessibility, is not a substitute for the work already being conducted by the Accessibility Commissioner and others to improve accessibility for different religious, mental health, and ability-based needs. This motion is intended to work in tandem with those efforts.

On the resource side, the Office of the VP University Affairs may determine that additional finances are needed to create sufficient space and access for necessary library activities.

---

**Sustainability Considerations**

This proposal will have positive impacts on SSMU’s sustainability efforts. It promotes accessibility and equality for a variety of academic situations and needs.

---



## Impact Decision and Next Steps

- of If the proposed resolution is approved, the Office of the VP University Affairs would be mandated, with collaboration of the SSMU Senate Caucus, to evaluate possible repurposing or transformation of McGill library spaces with the following goals in mind:
- 1) create sufficient space for students to attend online classes;
  - 2) create sufficient space for students to work in groups and socialize;
  - 3) create sufficient space for students to eat on campus.

The VP University Affairs must present this information in a report at the first legislative council meeting of Fall 2022, along with recommendations for changes to library spaces.

The resolution will also require future VPs of University Affairs to conduct monthly consultations with students on library accessibility. These sessions should be publicized through SSMU channels, and takeaways reported at SSMU meetings.

---

## Motion or Resolution for Approval

Be it resolved, that the Legislative Council approve the mandate of the Office of the VP University Affairs to evaluate library accessibility and recommend changes to library space use, specifically considering the impacts of COVID-19 on library spaces and student activities

Be it further resolved, that the Legislative Council approve the mandate of future VPs of University Affairs to conduct monthly consultations with students on library accessibility concerns until the end of the Winter 2023 semester, and bring these concerns to SSMU meetings when a significant number of students voice a similar concern with library accessibility.

---

## Results of the Vote

In favour	(UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED)
Opposed	()
Abstain	()