OSGOODE'S
DIGITAL INITIATIVE

FINAL REPORT | May 7, 2014

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OSGOODE HALL LAW SCHOOL

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I. PROCESS

This academic year featured the launch of Osgoode's Digital Initiative to determine whether and how Osgoode can extend, enrich and better coordinate the multiple digital initiatives already underway at the Law School. The Digital Initiative also seeks to consider what next steps should be taken in Osgoode's digital evolution: whether and how the Law School should develop new initiatives in important areas where we are not already active, and how to allocate existing and future resources to best support and most enhance the digital infrastructure already in place.

Since that time, a variety of consultative measures have been undertaken. A background paper was drafted and distributed in the late summer of 2013 to spark a conversation about digital innovations and best practices at Osgoode and beyond. The background paper is reflective: it lays out some of the digital projects currently underway at Osgoode in the areas of pedagogy, research, student experience and community life. It is also aspirational: it looks beyond Osgoode to other law schools and institutions for best practices and other examples of digital innovations taking place globally.

The Chairs of the Standing Committees of Faculty Council have been asked to respond to the background paper with any comments, observations and/or annotations. The Library Committee has submitted a detailed response while other Faculty Council committees addressed digital initiative issues in the course of their interim or annual reports to Faculty Council. Representatives from Student Caucus also consulted with Dean Sossin in the fall and shared their preliminary impressions. Following this meeting, a JD student initiated, designed and circulated a student technology survey to collect additional information on priority areas from the JD student body. Osgoode's Management Committee has also participated in the consultation process.

A Moodle site was mounted to engage the Osgoode community, promote dialogue and capture individual feedback from students, faculty and staff. The Moodle site can be accessed directly from the MyOsgoode portal home page. This past fall, the Standing Committee on Teaching and Learning also welcomed Professor Peter Sankoff who met with faculty and graduate students to discuss his experiences with the flipped classroom at University of Alberta Faculty of Law.

Supplementary information has also been obtained from the 2013 CALI Conference on Law School Computing (Chicago), the 2013 Future of Advocacy Conference (Toronto), the TedXYorkU 2013 event, and a host of journal and online publications. The Digital Initiative, further, is intended to align both with York's eLearning Integration Strategy (and in that regard, York's Teaching Commons have also provided additional support) as well as Experience Osgoode, the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan, which serves as the point of departure for Osgoode's Digital Initiative.

II. FEEDBACK

The feedback to date has been very constructive. One clear message emerging from the consultations is the need for the Digital Initiative to focus on ambitious, realistic and achievable goals. At this time we should be aiming to pursue projects which respond to needs and gaps, and which fit within Osgoode's mandate and existing strategic priorities. In addition to pursuing new undertakings, there is also a desire to address ongoing unresolved issues from previous attempts at modernization, such as improving internet access in the Ignat Kaneff building, and the quality of our audio recordings in JD classes.

Some of the areas of concern noted by JD students in the aforementioned technology survey are in the process of being addressed. Roughly 50% of student respondents noted dissatisfaction with paying an annual $40 fee for ExamSoft. This concern was also raised at the 2013 Tuition Town Hall meeting. In response, Osgoode has committed to a pilot arrangement which will eliminate this fee for two academic years beginning in the fall of 2014. Ease of signing into the Air York and Passport York systems are two other priority areas identified in the survey. Osgoode IT is currently working with York UIT to resolve this ongoing problem. Other areas identified as needing improvement include ensuring that the technology which already exists in classrooms functions properly and that there are adequate supports in place to assist with troubleshooting when needed. There are also longstanding concerns regarding the audio lecture capture system which were reiterated as part of this consultation. Some additional recommendations include hiring an IT consultant to work with faculty and students, laptop rentals for student conferences and lectures, flipped classrooms, YouTube videos for Quicklaw/Westlaw training, improved course (Moodle) websites, access to phone and other charger rentals in the library, reducing printing fees, more online course availability, and better/more availability of video as well as audio/podcast recordings. Clifford McCarten, Osgoode's JD student "Dean for a Day" suggested students be provided with a PDF containing all course materials for each of their classes (as opposed to the current mix of electronic and hard copy resources which students now navigate in most of their courses). This timely suggestion cuts across both the reconceptualising of Osgoode's Materials Distribution Center (MDC) and the varying use of Moodle in a little over half of Osgoode's JD courses.

Topics of central relevance for the Digital Initiative have also been the subject of various committee discussions. The Dean met with Student Caucus in the fall of 2013 to solicit feedback and explore possible priorities. In the spring, the Library Committee devoted significant attention to discussions around how to ensure the success of the Digital Commons, while at its February meeting, the Academic Policy & Planning Committee (APPC), and subsequently Faculty Council, approved a new course "Legal Information Technology."

III. PRIORITY AREAS

Building on the feedback received to date, we have identified five digital priority areas. In no rank order, they are: (1) the Digital Commons, (2) MyJD, (3) OPD online learning infrastructure, (4) Innovations in Pedagogy, and (5) Strengthening Osgoode's Digital Community. This provisional list is responsive to the comments and reactions gathered from the consultations and also builds on the direction set by Osgoode's Strategic Plan.

1. **The Digital Commons:** As discussed in the background paper, in 2013 the Law School purchased a Digital Commons license from Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress) and, led by the Law Library, we are in the process of uploading faculty research and scholarship to the site. The Digital Commons indexes the full text of every document posted (as well as the metadata) and integrates better with Google and Google's indexing crawlers, resulting in enhanced retrieval results for documents on the Digital Commons. The Digital Commons also supports a broad array of formats and media. Supporting the Digital Commons is intended to enhance rather than undermine our ongoing efforts to disseminate research through a variety of digital means as well, including SSRN, legal indexes, and online journals. Additionally the Digital Commons will provide an excellent archival repository for much of Osgoode's audio-visual (ie. non-text) resources such as webinars, podcasts and videos of special events. Osgoode has already invested in the start-up of the Digital Commons and envisions additional administrative support to ensure all scholarly material is uploaded as expeditiously as possible, to integrate the Digital Commons and to promote its use.

   In its "soft launch" period, during which the Osgoode Hall Law Journal collection has been available, there have been over 55,000 downloads from Osgoode's Digital Commons. As the Commons expands, we will need to consider additional policy and operational issues, ranging from the issues of copyright to AODA compliance (discussed further below). We also hope the Digital Commons can serve as an institutional archival repository for the Osgoode History and Archives Project (OHAP), including the Catalysts project highlighting alumni trailblazers, and some of the projects planned in conjunction with "Osgoode @125" celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the founding of Osgoode Hall Law School.

   Recommendation 1: Develop the Digital Commons as Osgoode's mechanism for disseminating research and continue to explore how the Law Library can provide the most effective leadership for this initiative; and, as per the motions passed at Faculty Council in February 2014, how Osgoode's Library Committee and Research and Seminars Committee can help develop policies and procedures to ensure the success of the Digital Commons.

2. **MyJD Portal:** Also discussed in the background paper, Osgoode's MyJD portal is the innovative digital record-keeping system of the Office of Admissions & Student Services. Developed by Osgoode's IT department, once completed it will have built-in degree audit capabilities so that students can track their own progress over the course of their three year JD degree. Given that the Federation of Law Societies of Canada has approved a national set of competencies in addition to our own internal Osgoode degree requirements (such as OPIR, UYRWR, Praxicum etc.), the development of MyJD is well-timed. Once it goes live, students will not only be able to digitally self-audit, but the MyJD system will also make it easier for students to interact more seamlessly

with the Office of Admissions & Student Services as they complete, submit and upload all forms electronically. With a projected launch date in 2014, the portal still requires significant work: all fillable PDF documents must still be created and an internal audit of all pre-loaded electronic student records must be completed to ensure they are without error. Students may order and pay for transcripts directly through MyJD. Students will also be able to apply for Exchange Programs and Letters of Permission through MyJD.

Recommendation 2: Develop the MyJD system to facilitate a seamless, efficient and accessible student service experience.

3. **OPD Online** Learning Infrastructure: Osgoode Professional Development has implemented an upgraded video-conferencing system for the Professional LLM. This upgrade allows students from around the globe to interact with their peers and to participate in discussions, ask questions and even see electronic presentations as easily as if they were in OPD's downtown Toronto classroom. OPD retained an e-learning consultant to review its offerings and help develop a strategy including a framework for decision-making on what to take online and what technologies make sense in view of users, budget, etc. The report was delivered at the end of 2013 and development of an implementation plan is in progress. Additionally, in 2014, OPD received a significant grant from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) for converting four existing National Committee on Accreditation (NCA) Exam Prep Courses and the Professional Responsibility Exam course from in-person lecture formats to online formats. The new course will be created solely as an online on demand course. By shifting to online and on demand, OPD will be able to offer participants greater flexibility to undertake the courses at a pace that fits their personal and professional schedules. Further, if the courses were available online, internationally trained lawyers living and seeking to practice outside Toronto would have the ability to undertake the courses without the additional costs of travelling to Toronto.

Recommendation 3: Develop and roll-out of OPD's distance learning plan and the MCI-funded NCA Prep course project.

4. **Pedagogy Innovation:** As set out in our Strategic Plan 2011-2016, we are aspiring to move from technology enhancements to classroom learning, to a more seamless integration of online and in-class pedagogy. The development of truly global classrooms includes harnessing the additional functionality of classroom and meeting space in the new building and continuing to invest in leading edge technology and training, so that Osgoode can continue and extend its leadership position in technology and pedagogy nationally and internationally. Following Peter Sankoff's presentation on flipped classrooms this past fall, a number of our faculty pointed out that while his innovations are potentially exciting they would require institutional support and a possible financial commitment. In partnership with eLearning at York and the Teaching Commons, we now have an opportunity to support these faculty members via the eLearning Curricular Innovation Grant and further promote a culture of experimentation with educational technology at the Law School. The first course which is being redesigned through this collaboration will be the first year LRW program under Professor Shelley Kierstead.

5. In addition, we propose to establish a pedagogy innovation fund with an initial infusion of $50K for technical equipment, software, training and RAs to be allocated by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Teaching & Learning, the Associate Dean and the Associate Dean, Research, in response to faculty requests. Work continues on Osgoode's not for credit online module entitled "Fiduciary Relationships in Commercial Context" and we anticipate it will be completed in the summer of 2014. A new Legal Information Technology course was approved by Faculty Council in February, 2014, and an entirely digital directed research project on the ethical dimensions of digital lawyering has been proposed for 2015.

Finally, digital resources also represent an important venue in which to express broader values of inclusion and advancing the public interest; for example, by ensuring our videos and digital content are AODA compliant and available on an "open access" basis.

Recommendation 4: Develop new approaches in legal education and experimentation with digital pedagogy through the leadership of Osgoode faculty through the establishment of an Osgoode Digital Innovation Fund (ODIF) under the direction of the Chair of the Standing Committee on Teaching and Learning, the Associate Dean, and the Associate Dean, Research who will develop a process for collegial input into the criteria for allocation of the Fund.

6. **Strengthening Osgoode's Digital Community:** In addition to the Digital Commons repository, Osgoode is looking to upgrade our website and enhance the use of digital platforms to assist with community engagement and our public access mandate. Osgoode's website redesign is with a view to creating a more intuitive and accessible online site with enhanced internal navigation leading people more easily to the information they are seeking. With the assistance of the Soshal Group, a consulting firm, we are in the process of designing the information architecture/site map. OPD's own website upgrade will streamline the site and facilitate one-stop shopping. In a similar vein, we are also in the process of revamping the MyOsgoode intranet to create a more user-friendly interface for students, staff and faculty to access important information and documents.

Moreover, social media platforms continue to be utilized throughout the institution. We are continuing to improve our podcasting capabilities as another means of making the law and the Law School more accessible to the broader community. The Osgoode Hall Law School YouTube channel includes a growing number of important lectures and videos, such as Osgoode's McMurtry Visiting Clinical Fellow David Lepofsky's introduction to Ethical Lawyering in a Global Community and related lectures in 2013-2014 as well as a collection of speakers from the Symposium in Honour of John McCamus in 2013. Our contributions to the legal blogosphere (IP Osgoode, IFLS, law.arts.culture, Off the Shelf, The Court, Dean's Blog, etc.) and through various Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook accounts continue to engage with the public, profile Osgoode's contributions to research and public debate, and help publicize important events and activities at Osgoode. New ventures with a strong digital mandate, such as Osgoode's Collaborative Research Lab (CRL) and the Winkler Institute for Dispute Resolution promise more innovation in this area in the years to come.

Digital resources also allow Osgoode to demonstrate leadership in the broader academic and public community. For example, Melanie Banka Goela, Osgoode's Student Success and Wellness Counsellor, led an Ontario wide initiative to secure provincial funding for the development of online mental health and wellness resources/tools which will be available to law students throughout Ontario later in 2014.

Recommendation 5: Support faculty, staff, students and alumni initiatives to broaden and enhance Osgoode's digital community. We should also develop a more coordinated approach to governance and decision-making in these areas so that innovations in one area can be used to benefit other areas.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Digital Initiative is intended neither as a starting point (since so many initiatives have already been commenced or are well established at Osgoode) nor an end point (as the momentum toward greater digital innovation is in many senses at an early stage). Rather, the Digital Initiative is intended to cohere, focus, amplify and facilitate the development of digital initiatives which advance Osgoode's mandate and strategic plan. These initiatives, however, do not stand alone or apart from the core activities of the Law School. In order for Osgoode to thrive in the future, the physical and digital aspects of the Law School must be integrated and mutually enhancing. Our hope is that this Digital Initiative and the resulting efforts to implement the recommendations will play a constructive and significant role in realizing this vision for Osgoode.

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