

MCLL

McGill
Community
for Lifelong
Learning

Annual Report 2023-2024

Gordon Campey



Come learn for the joy of it!



McGill

School of
Continuing Studies



President's Message

MCLL's strength is its volunteers. From acting as office volunteers, to study group moderators, lecturers and Zoom hosts, to leading and participating in our six committees, our volunteers bring their formidable experience, knowledge, skills and wisdom to these tasks. We are grateful for the generosity of so many in the MCLL community; some share their academic and technical expertise, while others roll out their interpersonal skills to create convivial events. As president, it's my privilege to witness all of this productive effort, delivered with public-spirited goodwill. Congratulations to all of those who have volunteered. Thank you for your contributions, and for a job well done!

This has been a year of transition and change. First, we made a transition from immediate post-COVID, with some remaining restrictions, to a back-to-normal era, without restrictions. For MCLL, this new era began with a memorable dinner June 21, 2023 in the Billiard Room at McGill's Faculty Club to thank volunteers. We gathered without masks, and rejoiced in rediscovering in-person conversation. We saw this again in the "not quite September" get together. Special thanks to Linda Sidel for organizing these events. We welcomed a similar return to normal with more in-person study groups, lectures, lunches and Open Houses, among others.

We also welcomed new people. We said goodbye to Program Administrator Ana Milic, who left MCLL in May 2023 after many years of distinguished service. A recruitment process began in June and concluded with interviews in August. Zoe Chiu was chosen from a strong field of candidates. A former entrepreneur, she is a self-starter with exceptional technical, marketing and leadership skills. Among others, she led a supercharged MCLL engagement in the annual McGill24 fundraising campaign, boosting our proceeds to over \$20,000 with the matching McGill funds. This financing is being channelled into improvements to our classrooms, signage and website to make them more accessible; again, Zoe is managing implementation of these upgrades.

The transition from one program administrator to another was smooth thanks to Sally Cooper, our Administrative Coordinator, who took on extra work for several months to ensure continuity in our core activities. We are all grateful to both Zoe and Sally for their excellent work. Their collaboration and professionalism resulted in a seamless transition.

My work as president was made easier by the teamwork of the executive committee and MCLL Council. Thanks to Chris Neal, vice president, on whom I called for advice, as well as support in writing letters, reports and other communications initiatives. Thanks also to Robert Winters, past president, who has always been generous with his time and sage advice.



Jeff Sidel has done an excellent job as treasurer. In August 2023, discussions with staff in the School of Continuing Studies (SCS) led to negotiations that concluded with a new “service level agreement” to clearly define the support we can expect from SCS for our communications and marketing work. Thanks to Jeff, Zoe, and Nadine Ozkan, who served as our negotiating team, for their skill and perseverance in coming up with a “win-win” agreement that lays out respective budgetary responsibilities, item by item.

Jeff has also adroitly managed to achieve budget balance for the 2023-2024 year. Budget line items have been aligned with those of SCS Finance. For the 2024-2025 year, MCLL loses pandemic-related concessions we had enjoyed for the last two years. The result was a compromise in which SCS maintains some of its earlier concessions, while we reassume a larger share of the pre-pandemic budgetary responsibility. To cover our increased expenses, MCLL raised its membership fee to \$125 per semester, while also making a concerted effort to increase membership. To that end, Jeff convened a “Net-30 Plus” task force to raise our membership by 10 each semester, for a total of 30 new members by year’s end. After the first semester of this push, we’ve already reached an increase of 19 new members, so although we are only one-third of the way into the campaign, we’ve achieved two-thirds of our target. Congratulations and thanks to Jeff and all members of the task force for this impressive progress!

Thanks to Nadine Ozkan for negotiating, with Robert Winters and Sharon Bishin, agreements with the Segal Centre and the Centaur Theatre, both of which will advertise MCLL in their communications, while we publicize their productions among our members, who now qualify for a discount on tickets. The relationship with the Segal Centre was further strengthened by MCLL’s creation of a study group focused on a play presented there, *Fifteen Dogs*.

Nadine and Yvon Bérubé, who has taken on leadership of the Communications Committee from her, also negotiated a communications agreement with *La Scena*, a magazine focused on musical performance in the Montreal area.

Linda Sidel and Marie Gravelle led, with support from Nadine, organization of our first in-person Open House, held March 26, 2024, to recruit new members. It was, by all accounts, a big success, bringing new members and, critically, new potential moderators, lecturers and hosts. Linda also deserves thanks for the many events whose organization she has led.

As always, Sue Purcell and Sharon Bishin do tireless work on producing the Newsletter and Ebulletin, filling them with stories, announcements and information that both entertains and informs; they are our communications lifelines.



Our study group offerings are the foundation of MCLL, and for them we owe gratitude to the moderators, as well as the Curriculum Committee, under the able leadership of Ana Maria Klein. We delivered 39 study groups in the spring term, an increase from recent years. This growth, combined with increased variety of topics, as well as new offerings such as museum and gallery tours, is critical to increasing our membership.

Thanks to Ginette Bazergui for her initiative in restarting the Membership and Planning Committee. She has produced a data-rich membership report, and led her committee in planning an exciting Members' Forum to be held October 18, 2024, to which members are invited to brainstorm MCLL's future.

Tim Skene is a vital resource for MCLL, managing information technology resources on a day-to-day basis, as well as planning and executing, with Zoe, upgrades to rooms 243 and 245. A consultant's estimate of asbestos mitigation costs involved in carrying out the upgrades, and our own judgement that these upgrades, while desirable, are not urgent, prompted MCLL Council to postpone the full upgrade. We are, however, proceeding with the minimal upgrades that do not involve asbestos mitigation. Another improvement Tim managed was the purchase and set up of new, more comfortable classroom chairs.

Tim helped with the Cynthia Price Verreault interview with Dick Pound at the MCLL AGM March 22nd. A video of the event has been produced. In addition, there is a video of the business portion of the meeting with address by Dean Carola.

Tim Skene also worked with Susan Van Gelder to organize file space on our internal McGill cloud, enabling us to share links to documents among committees rather than the files themselves. They've achieved this leap into state-of-the-art information management, while also updating many technical documents.

In addition, Susan has continued to lead a first-class team of experienced and knowledgeable hosts, whose skillful steering of Zoom interactions ensure that online and hybrid study groups run smoothly.

Outreach Committee chair Sandra Baines has provided strong leadership to this new group, which seeks to build links to other organizations, to identify and develop collaboration opportunities.

Development Committee chair Tony Wait has played a major leadership role in organizing our fundraising activities, obtaining \$15,000 from the Zellers Foundation.

Thanks to Astri Thorvik and Sandra Baines for organizing the office volunteers, and thanks to the volunteers themselves.



Council Secretary Lorne Huston has not only convened MCLL Council, and kept it on track with agendas and carefully recorded minutes, but also offered wise advice based on his long and helpful service to MCLL. Finally, I would like to mention the work of Sally Cooper in launching a review of the guidelines for Committee Chairs. A review of our MCLL Code of Conduct is also under way, to align them with analogous McGill University codes on student conduct and disciplinary procedures.

Finally, I would like to make special mention of Lorne Huston, Astri Thorvik and Robert Winters, who are leaving the MCLL Council after many years of service. Their thoughtful, and for the most part, behind-the-scenes work, has brought positive change, innovation, saved money, improved practice and delivered results at many levels.

I am grateful to all of you for your support during my tenure as president. MCLL's success—indeed, revival after the COVID doldrums—did not fall from the sky. It is the result of intelligent effort by a large team of talented, dedicated people. It has been an honour to serve with you.

Rick Jones

MCLL President, 2023-24



Financial Report

Financial Year May 1, 2023 - April 30, 2024

	Actual 2022-2023	Budget 2023-2024	Actual 2023-2024
Revenue			
Study Groups			
Spring 2023	30,580	33,360	33,360
Fall 2023	42,680	46,080	46,080
Winter 2024	39,480	39,480	42,120
Total Study Groups	112,740	118,920	121,560
Lectures			
	16,120	16,000	14,780
Total Revenue	128,860	134,920	136,340
Expenses			
Salaries & Benefits	90,572	75,941	74,839
Office expenses	15,500	31,291	36,886
Overhead	23,195	24,285	24,540
Total Expenses	129,267	131,517	136,265
Fund Balance	-407	3,403	75

Treasurer's Report: FY 2024 and Outlook on FY 2025

For fiscal year 2024, we have exceeded our revenue goals by 1% to \$136,340, representing a 6% increase over than what we achieved in 2023. Further, we maintained our discipline in managing our expenses and in doing so, achieved a balanced budget in which revenues equal to that of expenses.

Moving forward into fiscal 2025, it will be necessary to overcome significant challenges in terms of rising costs beyond our control. To this end, MCLL is currently engaged in a concerted and aggressive campaign to increase our membership by a minimum of 30 members over current membership levels.

Called, Operation Net 30 Plus, our efforts are already paying off in as much as we exceeded our forecast expectations in membership this current spring semester. We achieved approximately two-thirds of our goal for the entire year in just one semester.

That being said, and to ensure that we breakeven financially in fiscal 2025, we also have to reduce our expenses without compromising too much of the benefits that our members deserve. We are already fully engaged in exploring all options.

Jeff Sidel, Treasurer

