

University-Based Approaches for Older Adults: Adapting Universities for the 100-year Lifespan

Case Study: McGill Community for Lifelong Learning

Executive Summary

This study, *University-Based Approaches for Older Adults: Adapting Universities for the 100-year Lifespan*, uses the McGill Community for Lifelong Learning (MCLL) as a case study to probe issues related to seniors' learning within university contexts, including demographics, effects of learning on the lives of older adults, mutual benefits and expectations for learners and the university community of which they are members. The intention of this research is to enable the continuous improvement of MCLL and, given national and international demographic shifts, to add new perspectives to the literature on the increasingly vital topic of continuing to learn throughout the lifespan.

The McGill Community for Lifelong Learning, with about 1000 members, has a 30 year history at McGill University as a division of the School of Continuing Studies (SCS). Members (approximately 70:30, women to men) are defined as individuals who have taken at least one study group at MCLL within the past two years. The purpose of the organization is to provide learning opportunities for older adults, who are driven by the love of learning, primarily through study groups that use peer learning approaches. A volunteer-driven organization, study group leaders ("moderators") are volunteers who provide leadership but who are not necessarily subject matter experts; all study group participants are expected to contribute to the discussions and the learning. Each year, approximately 100 distinct study groups (most of which meet for a full academic term) are offered as well as about 120 one-off lectures. MCLL runs on a tight budget and is financed through members' fees. The School of Continuing Studies (SCS) supports MCLL through a general policy framework based on University policies and practices, space (made available at a minimal cost), and a number of services (e.g. HR, marketing, registration, fundraising, IT, financial).

While MCLL conducts periodic membership surveys to gain feedback and suggestions, no comprehensive study has taken place since 1995 (Lusthaus et al). The current study, that uses both quantitative (survey with a 53% return rate) and qualitative (focus groups and interviews) methodologies, is intended to provide data that will be used for internal reflection and planning as well as to assess, given societal and demographic changes, whether opportunities exist for an enhanced relationship with McGill.

Briefly summarized, results indicate that MCLL members are highly engaged individuals. Two-thirds have an affiliation with McGill beyond their membership in MCLL and just under half are McGill graduates. About one-third have volunteered with MCLL/McGill and over 40% report having donated to the University. Education levels are high with four out of five holding a minimum of an undergraduate degree and about half with Masters or Doctoral degrees. Not surprisingly, members have held impressive career paths with about 84% identifying as Professionals, Educators or Managers. Income levels are also considerably higher than the general Montreal population. From their perspectives, it is important to be affiliated with a university-based learning program that provides intellectual stimulation and social interaction.

Recommendations emerging from the data are aligned with the goals of the study:

1. To more clearly understand the demographics of the current MCLL membership.
2. To understand the ways in which learning (through MCLL) impacts the well-being (e.g. intellectual, social, physical, mental) of MCLL members.
3. To understand what MCLL members perceive that they need from McGill University and how they believe they can contribute to McGill.
4. To understand what senior McGill leadership perceive that McGill can contribute to MCLL and how they believe that McGill can benefit from having MCLL as part of McGill.
5. To understand the preferences of MCLL members regarding learning models and options (e.g. peer learning, intergenerational learning, technology assisted)

One outcome that was somewhat surprising, when we probed perceptions of the relationship with McGill, was the intensity of the desire to be more closely integrated with the University community. Members believe that there is a deep and wide pool of experience and expertise resident within MCLL that could be more effectively recognized and utilized by the University.

This study adds to the literature regarding seniors' learning and the role of universities by providing an important case study that highlights the voices of older adults. The study addresses many of the questions identified by Talmage et al (2018) as future research needs regarding older adults and, while focused on McGill University, provides recommendations that can help to inform other universities and their practices regarding this demographic.

1. Background to the Study

This study, focusing on the McGill Community for Lifelong Learning (MCLL), can be taken as a stand-alone piece of work intended to inform and improve MCLL and the university of which it is a part, McGill University situated in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Likewise, it can be viewed as an initial component for a broader study with more far-reaching goals and geographical footprint.

We begin with the broader context before focusing on this specific case study, specifically the question of the role of universities, with a focus on North America, in the provision of rich learning opportunities for older adults, defined as 55+. Much has been written, in particular since the publication of *The 100 Year Life: Living and Working in an Age of Longevity* (Gratton and Scott, 2016), about societal implications of longer lifespans and the burgeoning increase in the proportion of the population in the older demographic. Likewise, considerable work has been done on the contributions of continuous learning to successful aging and means by which specific universities are providing some learning opportunities for older adults. What appears to be missing, however, is a comprehensive look at how North American universities, in particular those that are publicly funded, can and should integrate older adults into their learning communities.

Central research questions that relate to this topic include:

1. What are the benefits of a university-based focus on integrating older adults into its learning community? To older adults? To the university? To learning pedagogies?

2. What types of university-based approaches to the learning of older adults in Canada currently exist and what is their status in terms of degrees of acceptability, funding and implementation?
3. What do older adults want and need from universities and how do they think they can contribute to universities?
4. How does senior university leadership approach the issues of the role of universities in the continued learning of older adults and the potential contributions of older adults to the university?
5. What practical recommendations emerge from this study for universities and for older adults with regard to catalyzing major improvements to university-based approaches to the learning for older adults?

The McGill Community for Lifelong Learning, with about 1000 members, has a 30-year history at McGill University as a division of the School of Continuing Studies (SCS).

Members are defined as individuals who have participated in at least one study group at MCLL within the past two years; according to the MCLL database, ages range from 23 to 99 with a median age range of 71-75 and a women to men ratio of about 70:30. The purpose of the organization is to provide learning opportunities for older adults, who are driven by the love of learning, primarily through study groups that use peer learning approaches. In this volunteer-driven organization, study group leaders (“moderators”) are volunteers who provide leadership but who are not necessarily subject matter experts; all study group participants are expected to contribute to the discussions and the learning. Each year, approximately 100 distinct study groups (most of which meet for a full academic term) are offered as well as about 120 one-off lectures.

MCLL functions with the guidance of one management position (4 days per week), who reports jointly to MCLL and SCS and who is supported by a part-time assistant (15 hours/week). The MCLL Council, comprised of 12 members, oversees the work of six standing committees: Curriculum, Planning, Office Volunteers, Communications, Development and IT. The School of Continuing Studies supports MCLL through a general policy framework based on University policies and practices, space (made available at a reasonable cost), and a number of services (e.g. HR, marketing, registration, fundraising, IT, financial). MCLL is financially self-supporting through fees.

While MCLL conducts periodic membership surveys to gain feedback and suggestions, no comprehensive study has taken place since 1995 (Lusthaus et al). The current study of MCLL fits well within the context of the broader questions outlined above. Goals for the study were established, in conjunction with an advisory committee of MCLL members, as follows:

1. To more clearly understand the demographics of the current MCLL membership.
2. To understand the ways in which learning (through MCLL) impacts the well-being (e.g. intellectual, social, physical, mental) of MCLL members.
3. To understand what MCLL members perceive that they need from McGill University and how they believe they can contribute to McGill.
4. To understand what senior McGill leadership perceive that McGill can contribute to MCLL and how they believe that McGill can benefit from having MCLL as part of McGill.
5. To understand the preferences of MCLL members regarding learning models and options (e.g. peer learning, intergenerational learning, technology assisted learning).

2. Context of this Study: Literature Related to Older Adults' Learning

The MCLL study can be viewed as a case study of a particular organization with a specific university. This project, however, builds on what we already know and can develop new knowledge and understandings that will contribute to improvements to society through education. The following is a brief review of existing literature in six thematic areas related to our research questions.

a) Demographic Trends

Demographic trends, both in North America and internationally, speak to the growing significance of the focus of this study—older adults. There is not, however, consensus on the definition of “older adult” which ranges from 50+ in some studies to 65+ in others, although the trends, and their implications for education, are very clear. The numbers are indeed striking. In 2050, the number of Americans aged 65 and older is projected to be 88.5 million, more than double its projected population of 40.2 million in 2010 (Shinagel, 2012, p21). Not only are there more older adults, but they are living longer. In 1900, the life expectancy in the United States was 47; however, in 2015, the life expectancy for males will be 76.5 and for females, 81.4 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). “This means that in 2050, 1 in 5 persons will be aged 65 or older” (Disilvestro, 2013, p80). According to Statistics Canada, “In 2016, for the first time, the share of seniors (aged 65+) exceeded the share of children (0-14 years) living in Canada”: 16.9% compared to 16.6% of total population (Statistics Canada 2016 Census). The proportion of this demographic will continue to increase in Canada with one person in four aged 65

or over by 2031 and expected to remain stable for at least three decades thereafter.

(<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-520-x/2010001/aftertoc-aprestdm1-eng.htm>)

Likewise, in 1921, life expectancy at birth in Canada was 57.1 years; in 2011, however, it had increased to 81.7 years. (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-624-x/2014001/article/14009-eng.htm>)

World Economic Council (2012) data concur: In 2010, older adults (defined as age 60 and older) comprised 11% of the world's population and are expected to grow to 22% in the year 2050 (World Economic Forum, 2012). Gratton & Scott (2017) contend that the implications of a longer life and increased numbers of older adults, for example, longer work lives and multi-staged lives, are upon us and require serious debate and action.

And yet, in a time of declining enrolments among traditional 18-24 year olds, this increasing population remains a significantly underserved one on college campuses — with less than 4% enrolled in credit-bearing or degree programs and not much more enrolled in non-credit education and training programs (*BLS data for 2012 cited by Stanford Center on Longevity*). As stated by DiSilvestro (2013), “Educating older adults has been important to adult and continuing education for years, but the reality of a skyrocketing aging population is now upon us” (p 79).

Within the McGill context, although some credit courses may be open to older learners, there is no formal provision for auditing, as exists in many universities and the majority of learning for older adults takes place within the MCLL organization. MCLL typically

defines older adults as 55+. The University has recently established a Working Group on Lifelong Learning (<https://www.mcgill.ca/lifelong-learning/>) and it is hoped that this study will help to inform the work of that group.

b) Benefits of Learning for Older Adults

In addition to the argument of sheer numbers and longer lifespan, why should learning for older adults be a topic of importance? Multiple studies have focused on the benefits associated with learning (formal, informal or non-formal) undertaken by older adults. Descriptive language varies and can carry subtle differences—for example “greater well-being” (Talmage et al, 2015) and (Narushima et al (2013), “aging successfully” (Simone and Sculli, 2006), (Reichstadt et al, 2010) and (Sloane-Seale & Kops, 2010), “active aging” and “healthy aging” (Boudiny, 2013), “comfortable aging” (Cruikshank, 2013), “productive aging” (Boudiny, 2013) and (Boulton-Lewis et al, 2006)—but, in essence, refers to the life improvements experienced by older adults as a result of their exposure to learning opportunities.

On a more specific level, authors point to benefits such as “cognitive health, physical health, resilience, self-integration, creative expression, and community-building” (Talmage et al, 2018). Shinagel (2012) lists the following benefits:

- Education promotes self-reliance and independence among the elderly.
- Education enables older people to cope more effectively in a complex and changing environment.

- Education for and by older people enhances their potential to contribute to society.
- Education encourages the elderly to communicate their experiences to each other and to other generations.
- Education is critical for lifelong learning and self-actualization. (p21)

Sloane-Seale and Kops' work (2010) provides a more detailed description of benefits achieved through learning: "Educational activities positively influence mental and physical activity, which in turn result in more positive health and well-being; and that spirituality and life planning, including a positive sense of self, a focus on personal renewal and growth, a connection to the broader community, and setting life goals, contribute to successful aging". Likewise, Withnall (2016) draws the following conclusions:

- From a *behaviourist perspective*, older adults can learn to adjust to life transitions through later life learning.
- From a *cognitivist perspective*, later life learning may have a protective effect on mental power and memory.
- From a *social or situational perspective*, learning builds networks, trust, reciprocity, and social connections.
- From a *humanist perspective*, later life learning fulfils older adults' self-actualisation needs. (p160)

This MCLL study tests and expands on these concepts.

c) Benefits of Older Adults' Learning Beyond the Individual

In addition to benefits to individuals, are there effects on communities when older adults participate in learning activities? Merriam & Kee (2014) make a compelling case from a social capital perspective for greater attention to learning for older adults:

A community's wellbeing is directly impacted by the status of its older adult population, whether one is speaking broadly of the world as a community, regionally, or in reference to one's local neighborhood. Research has firmly demonstrated that the more engaged, active, and healthy older adults are, the less drain they are on community services and resources. At the same time, these same adults are contributing to a community's wellbeing through volunteering, caregiving, civic engagement, and intergenerational activities. Conscious attention by policy makers and educators to enhancing lifelong learning opportunities can make this connection even more viable. However, issues of access and opportunity cloud the potential of older adult learners for contributing to community wellbeing. (p14)

They point to international initiatives to draw attention to this issue:

The European Commission is promoting more lifelong learning opportunities for both older workers and retired people. In particular, member nations have five challenges with regard to *older* adult learning: (a) Lift barriers to participation, making participation more equitable; (b) ensure the quality of adult learning programs through professional training and good pedagogical practices; (c) recognize learning outcomes whether they be from formal, nonformal, or informal learning; (d) invest in education for older people and migrants; and (e) understand that "there is a need for better insight into the benefits of adult learning and the barriers to its uptake, and for better data on providers, trainers and training delivery" (European Commission, 2006, in Merriam & Kee, p13)

Some academic interest exists on the topic of community enrichment, for example, through a collaboration between the Stanford Graduate School of Education's Centre on Adolescence and Encore.org that explores purposeful lives and community contribution by older adults. In addition, reference to the value of intergenerational learning, and the inherent link with older adults, increasingly appears in educational publications. From the limited literature that addresses the broader societal benefits resulting from ensuring

that older adults are afforded rich learning opportunities, however, it appears to be a topic worthy of further exploration.

d) Existing Options for Older Adults

Considerable literature exists regarding learning programs/organizations that are targeted specifically for older adults. Most common in North America are community-based programs but these are typically independent (e.g. Encore.org). Shinegal (2012) briefly reviews a number of organized models, for example, University of the Third Age (U3A) (primarily existing in Europe), and those that primarily exist in the U.S., including Institutes of Retired Professionals (IRP), Elderhostel, Institutes for Learning in Retirement (ILR) and Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes (OLLI). Of these models, OLLIs (of which there are about 130) are consistently associated with universities (but not necessarily funded by their hosts) and feature non-credit programming for the 50+. Simone & Scullli (2006) likewise identify providers of learning for older adults and focus on cognitive benefits of participation in Lifelong Learning Institutes associated with universities. They also point to a growing trend of retirement communities linked with universities, of which there are about 50 in the U.S.

Kops (2020) reviews trends in programs for older adults in Canadian universities from the perspective of the providers of those opportunities. An important distinction in the current study is that the voices of learners provide the focus.

e) Role of Universities

While there are calls for universities to embrace older adults as part of their mission, little seems to have been written regarding benefits/potential benefits to universities of doing so. Notably, Withnall (2016) explores the topic of what universities can contribute to learning in later life, defined as 50+, and provides some practical examples. Withnall (2016) observes that “Universities as major educational providers can and should adapt to fully address the challenges and barriers faced by older adults through the creation of appropriate opportunities for later life learning. Universities have the potential to bridge disciplinary and geographic barriers to overcome the intellectual compartmentalisation that has often impeded later life learning research and practice” (p162) and concludes with the following question: “Universities, however, are large, complex institutions with a myriad of goals, often competing. If the needs of adult learners in general and older adult learners, in particular, are not to be marginalised, might a more strategic and multifaceted approach be required?” (p164)

The approach most commonly cited is the Age-Friendly Universities (AFU) movement. For example, Talmage et al (2016) begin their discussion of AFUs with the following: “Response to the educational needs and interests of older adults requires innovative pedagogies and practices of teaching, research, and community engagement. While traditionally geared towards provision for younger adults, ...universities have the potential to play a major role in innovation for later life learning for older adults.” (p538)

The AFU movement began with the collaboration among three universities: Dublin City University, Strathclyde University in Glasgow and Arizona State University and the subsequent development of ten AFU Principles:

1. To encourage the participation of older adults in all the **core activities** of the university, including educational and research programs.
2. To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue **second careers**.
3. To recognize the **range of educational needs** of older adults (from those who were early school-leavers through to those who wish to pursue Master's or PhD qualifications).
4. To promote **intergenerational learning** to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.
5. To widen access to **online educational opportunities** for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.
6. To ensure that the university's **research agenda** is informed by the needs of an aging society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.
7. To increase the understanding of students of the **longevity dividend** and the increasing complexity and richness that aging brings to our society.
8. To enhance access for older adults to the university's range of **health and wellness** programs and its **arts and cultural activities**.
9. To engage actively with the university's own **retired community**.
10. To ensure regular **dialogue** with organizations representing the interests of the aging population.

(Copied from AFU website)

Talmage et al (2016) report that 48 institutions have joined the Age-Friendly University Network, 27 in the U.S. and 7 in Canada. From the list provided, however, major research-intensive universities in North America, including McGill University, are largely absent. Talmage et al provide examples of innovative ways in which the three founding institutions have implemented the AFU Principles. They observe that:

Achieving a university that is age-friendly in practice would require nothing less than a cultural transformation for most higher education institutions. The challenges are clearly considerable for institutions with an educational mission centred on young adults. However, our experience from three universities in Ireland, the UK, and the USA suggests that there is much to be gained from even taking the first step of opening discussion and debate involving all interested parties. In these debates, the diverse voices of older members of our communities have an important role to play in bringing us back to central questions concerning the role of universities in contemporary society and issues of access to higher-level knowledge. The possibilities for mutual learning, dynamic development, and innovative outcomes are considerable. (p551)

Disilvestro (2013) proposes that embracing older adults provides a growing challenge but also a golden opportunity for higher education:

Higher education is important to older adults, and older adults are important to higher education. Adult and continuing educators have an important role in helping colleges and universities understand the characteristics, needs, and aspirations of older adults. There is a wide diversity in the needs of older adults, and the reasons they participate in higher education are multifaceted. Yet higher education must chart new pathways for older adults to participate, and continuing education is poised to do this best. Lifelong learning is an important ingredient for aging well. Older adults not only learn for themselves, but they also contribute to their communities and the higher education institutions that help them. The challenge is clear. The opportunity is real. The time to act is now. (p87)

Ratsoy (2016) argues that embracing older learners can help universities to advance the frequently-touted intention of improved community engagement. Likewise, there are important economic and institutional considerations for universities, in particular those that are publicly funded. As the traditional aged university population shrinks, universities may look to alternative sources of enrolment. A shift in focus on older learners, however, means adapting to the pedagogic and service needs of this population which may be quite different. Universities cannot simply substitute or add on

mature learners. They must adapt their institutional culture, systems and approaches to higher education.

This current study will move the needle on this challenge by increasing the knowledge and understanding of MCLL members' needs and perceptions related to McGill University, by exploring perceptions and ideas of both older learners and university senior administration and by distilling these inputs into practical recommendations that can trigger discussion and action, both at McGill and elsewhere.

f) Future Research Needs

The most comprehensive identification of future research needs regarding learning for older adults is found in Talmage et al (2018) and is based on a detailed review of sixty articles regarding Osher Lifelong Learning Network in the U.S. They identify twelve emerging under-researched questions that might guide future research and practice (p 115):

1. What are effective lifelong learning strategies to help older adults reach their highest potential(s) for physical and cognitive health?
2. How does lifelong learning transform the lives of older adults?
3. How might lifelong learning institutes continue to serve their current populations while also working to reach and serve other diverse older adult populations?
4. How do we design and structure lifelong learning programs and institutes that will sustain or thrive for the long-term and have long-term impact for lifelong learners?
5. How can lifelong learning institutes effectively utilize current and emergent technologies for learning in their programs?
6. How might lifelong learning institutes effectively encourage creative expression?
7. How must lifelong learning institutes adapt to effectively reach older adults, especially diverse populations not currently engaged with lifelong learning?

8. What are effective strategies and pedagogies for older adults?
9. What is the place for and benefits of intergenerational learning in lifelong learning programs?
10. What are effective ways to evaluate lifelong learning institutes and their programs/programming?
11. What role does community-building play in lifelong learning?
12. Which roles do community partnerships play in lifelong learning?

They go on to suggest that, in terms of methodology, “Meta-analyses and cross-institute analyses will help research on lifelong learning institutes move forward” (p116). They further observe that “Many more studies will be necessary to achieve necessary depth in the areas of adult and continuing education, aging and health, and educational gerontology. As already mentioned, greater interdisciplinary research is important.” (p119). Notably, research into what older adults need and want from universities, what little there is, focuses largely on subjects of interest; an exploration of policy and practice is virtually absent.

The current study addresses many of the questions identified by Talmage et al (2018), albeit using the case study of a particular institution, McGill University, and uses a comprehensive approach that provides insights from multiple perspectives.

3. Research Methodology

As outlined in Section 1, the goals of this study include the following:

1. To more clearly understand the demographics of the current MCLL membership.
2. To understand the ways in which learning (through MCLL) impacts the well-being (e.g. intellectual, social, physical, mental) of MCLL members.
3. To understand what MCLL members perceive that they need from McGill University and how they believe they can contribute to McGill.
4. To understand what senior McGill leadership perceive that McGill can contribute to MCLL and how they believe that McGill can benefit from having MCLL as part of McGill.
5. To understand the preferences of MCLL members regarding learning models and options (e.g. peer learning, intergenerational learning, technology assisted learning).

To achieve these goals, this study uses multiple and mixed methodologies—both qualitative and quantitative. To collect data on the demographics as well as attitudes, perceptions, ideas and learning needs of older adults, a survey (using both closed and open-ended questions) was sent using Lime Survey, the tool supported by McGill University, to 1003 MCLL members (defined as individuals who had participated in a study group within the previous two years). 530 surveys were completed (373 fully and 157 partially) for a return rate of 52.9%.

To probe in greater depth the learning preferences of members as well as their perceptions and ideas about the relationship of MCLL with the larger University, eight focus groups (two hours each) were conducted with a total of 64 participants from the MCLL community.

To collect data on the attitudes, perceptions, experiences and ideas of senior university leadership, the following individuals generously agreed to add their insights: McGill University Principal; Associate Provost (Teaching and Academic Programs), Dean of Continuing Studies.

Quantitative data analysis was undertaken using Lime Survey tools, Excel and SPSS.

Qualitative content analysis was undertaken by identifying major themes and frequencies, as well as collating all comments and ideas.

4. Research Findings

Research findings are presented according to themes that emerge from the data.

a) Demographics

Responses to the survey question on gender (N=378) indicate that females are in the majority (70.3%F, 29.7%M), which is consistent with the gender distribution of the overall MCLL population (70.5%F, 29.5%M). As seen in Figure 1, there is a wide spread in age among respondents with approximately two-thirds between 65 and 80. When compared with age ranges recorded in the overall MCLL database that shows 15% below 65 (Figure 2), there is a slight skew towards older age groupings.

Figure 1. Age ranges of respondents (N=378)

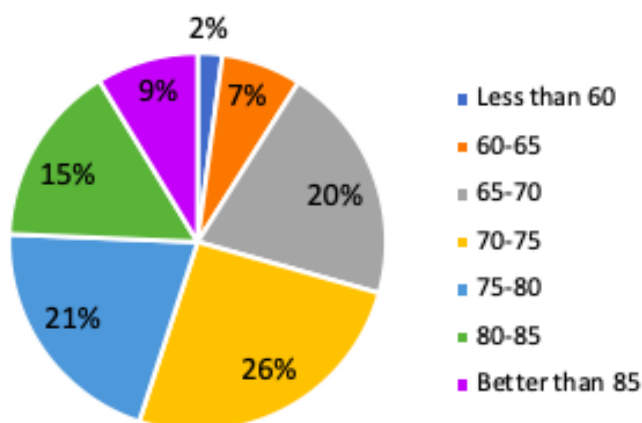
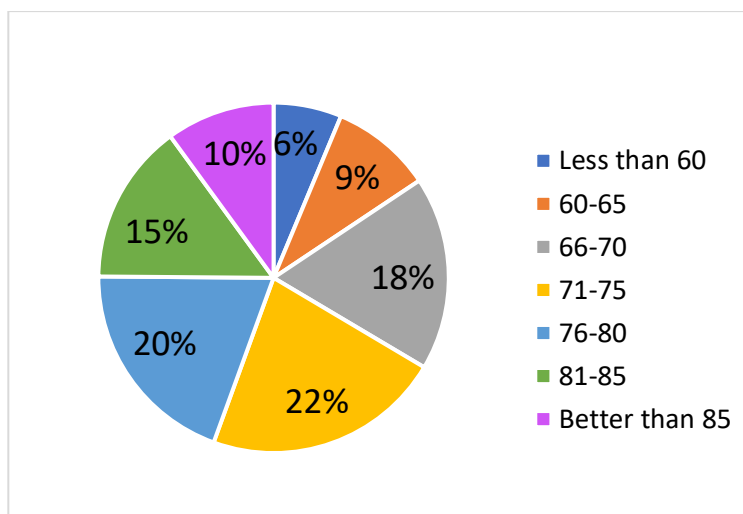


Figure 2. Age ranges of all MCLL members



Marital status and living arrangements also help us to understand the MCLL population. As seen in Figure 3, just over one half of respondents have a partner (married/common law) with approximately equal proportions who are widowed or divorced and about 12% who are single/never married. Living arrangements (Figure 4) data reveal that just under one half of respondents live alone with approximately the same proportion living with a partner.

Figure 3. Marital status of respondents (N=376)

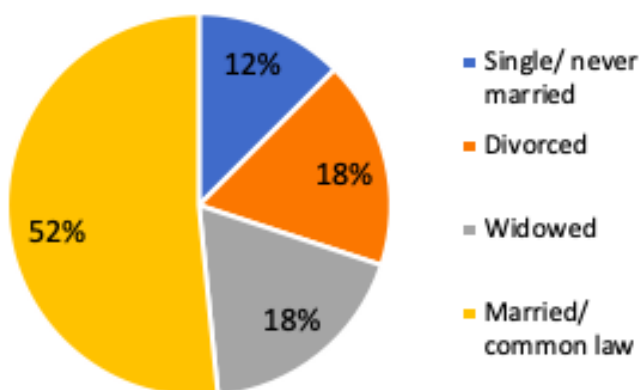
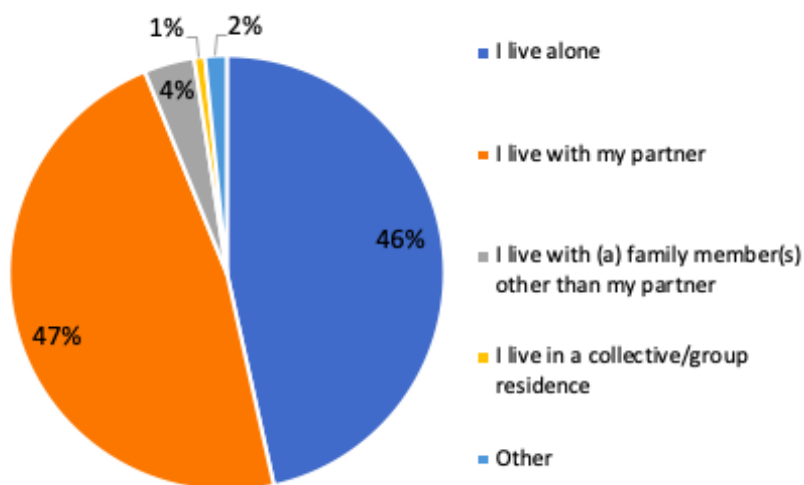


Figure 4. Living arrangements of respondents (N=374)



With regard to length of time with MCLL, Table 1 indicates that there is a range of experience amongst respondents, with 43.7% having significant longevity (more than 5 years) with the organization, 44.1% in the 1-5 year category and 12.2% being relatively new to MCLL. This range allowed testing to determine whether there was a link between this and other selected variables.

Table 1. Length of MCLL membership (N=444)

Membership duration	Count	Percentage
Less than 1 year	54	12.2%
1-5 years	196	44.1%
5-10 years	96	21.6%
More than 10 years	98	22.1%

b) Linguistic and Ethnic Diversity

For respondents to the question of country of birth (N=378), 61.4% report that they were born in Canada—a smaller percentage than for the overall Montreal population (74.9%) as reported by StatsCan (2016). An additional 20.6% of survey respondents indicate the

UK (12.4%) or US (8.2%), with the remainder originating in a wide variety of locations worldwide. With regard to mother tongue, 73.0% of total respondents (N=378) report English with 12.2% indicating French. The remaining approximately 15% present a broad array of languages as mother tongue, most commonly German (3.4%) and Italian (2.1%) but including multiple other languages. These results for survey respondents differ from the overall population of the Island of Montreal; 2016 census figures show that 46,4% of the population declared French as their mother tongue, 16,0% claimed English, 32,8% declared another language while 4,8% declared more than one mother tongue.

(http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/MTL_STATS_FR/MEDIA/DOCUMENTS/POPULATION%20ET%20D%C9MOGRAPHIE_12SEPTEMBRE2017_LANGUES_AGGLO_RMR.PDF)

With regard to physical challenges, Table 2 demonstrates that one-third of respondents experience at least one issue that may have implications for the learning environment.

Table 2. Physical challenges experienced by respondents (N=410*)

Physical challenges	Count	Percentage
Reduced mobility	46	11.2%
Reduced hearing acuity	76	18.5%
Reduced sight	15	3.7%
I do not experience any of the situations described	255	62.2%
Other	18	4.4%

- Note: # responses (410) exceeds # respondents (384) as some respondents indicated more than one choice.

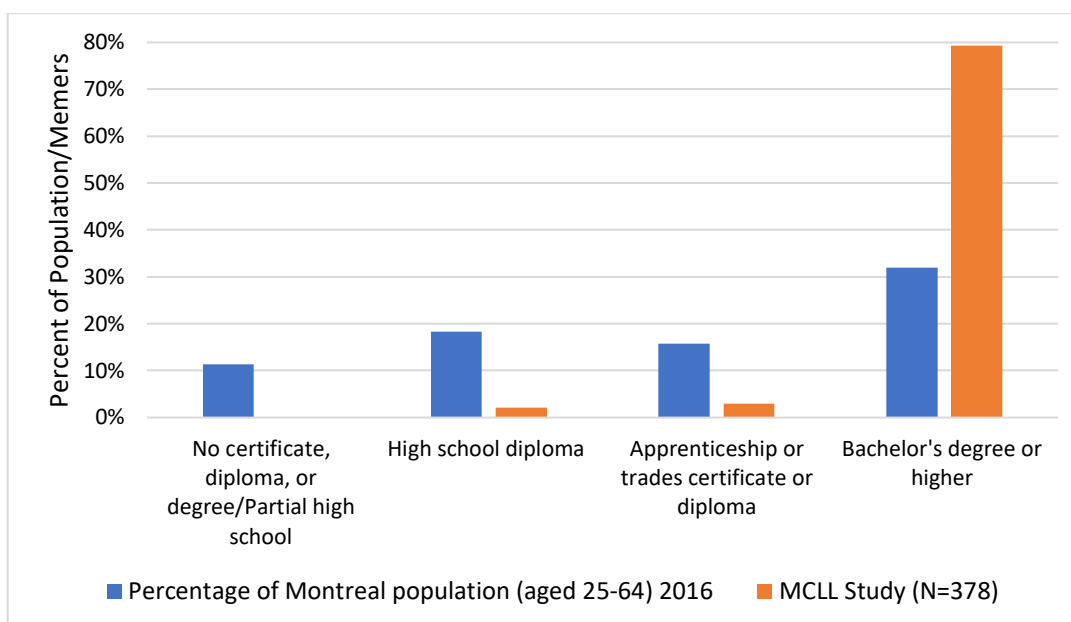
c) Educational Background

As seen in Table 3, the level of education of MCLL members is high; four out of five respondents (N=378) hold a minimum of an undergraduate degree. More specifically, 38.8% have a Masters degree, 30.4% have completed an undergraduate degree and 10.9% have earned a Doctorate. Another 11% have completed a partial university undergraduate program or a community/technical college program. No one claims less than high school graduation.

Table 3. Educational background of respondents (N=378)

Highest level achieved	Count	Percentage
Partial high school	0	0.0%
High school graduation	8	2.1%
Partial community/technical college	4	1.1%
Community/technical college graduation	11	2.9%
Partial university undergraduate program	30	7.9%
University undergraduate graduation	115	30.4%
Master's degree	144	38.1%
Doctorate degree	41	10.8%
<i>Other</i>	25	6.6%

Comparison data with the population of Montreal are not available for the age group of 65+. Figure 5, however, compares the levels of education of MCLL survey respondents with adults (aged 25-64) living in Montreal. Despite education levels having increased in the general adult population, it is clear that MCLL members have much higher educational attainment than the current adult population of Montreal.

Figure 5. Comparison of Education Levels

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-CMA-Eng.cfm?TOPIC=10&LANG=Eng&GK=CMA&GC=462>

d) Career Backgrounds/Income Levels

Not surprisingly, given the educational achievement of members, the array of careers reported by respondents is impressive. Only four respondents (out of N=378) indicate that they did not work outside the home. A total of 84.1% report having worked as Professionals (45.5%), Educators (23.5%) or Managers (15.1%). The Professional category is expanded in Table 4, demonstrating the broad range of professional expertise within MCLL.

Table 4. Breakdown of Professional category (N=188*)

Profession	Count
Health administration/management	7
Nurse	9
Physical therapy/O.T.	7
Pharmacist	4
Community health	3
Social worker	6

<i>General/Other medical field</i>	7
Consultant	8
Project manager	8
Accountant/Finance	7
Trading/Investment/Economist	4
<i>General/Other business field</i>	8
IT/Software/Technology	12
Law (lawyer, paralegal)	10
Translator	7
Writer/Journalism	9
Communications	5
Arts, entertainment	6
Politics/Diplomacy	6
Librarian	8
Engineer	7
Unspecified	12
Other	11

- Note: # responses (188) exceeds # respondents (165) as some respondents indicated more than one choice.

Likewise, the Educator category is broken out into level taught in Table 5.

Table 5. Breakdown of Educator category (N=137)

Level taught	Count
Elementary	16
High school	29
CEGEP	26
University	32
Adult Education	5
School Administration (Principal, etc.)	10
Unspecified	9
Other	10

- Note: # responses (137) exceeds # respondents (97) as some respondents indicated more than one choice.

Income levels, always a sensitive survey question, are shown in Tables 6 and 7. Not surprisingly, for both personal and household incomes, approximately one-third of respondents selected “Prefer not to answer”. Regarding personal income, just under half of respondents indicated that their annual income is \$75,000 or less. For household

(self and partner) income, just over 50% report an income of \$75,000 or above and 37% report an income of \$100,000 or above.

Table 6. Annual personal income of respondents (N=377)

Income range	Count	Percentage
Less than \$50K	93	24.7%
\$50K-\$75K	88	23.3%
\$75K-\$100K	37	9.8%
\$100K-\$150K	29	7.7%
More than \$150K	12	3.2%
Prefer not to answer	118	31.3%

Table 7. Annual family income of respondents (N=194)

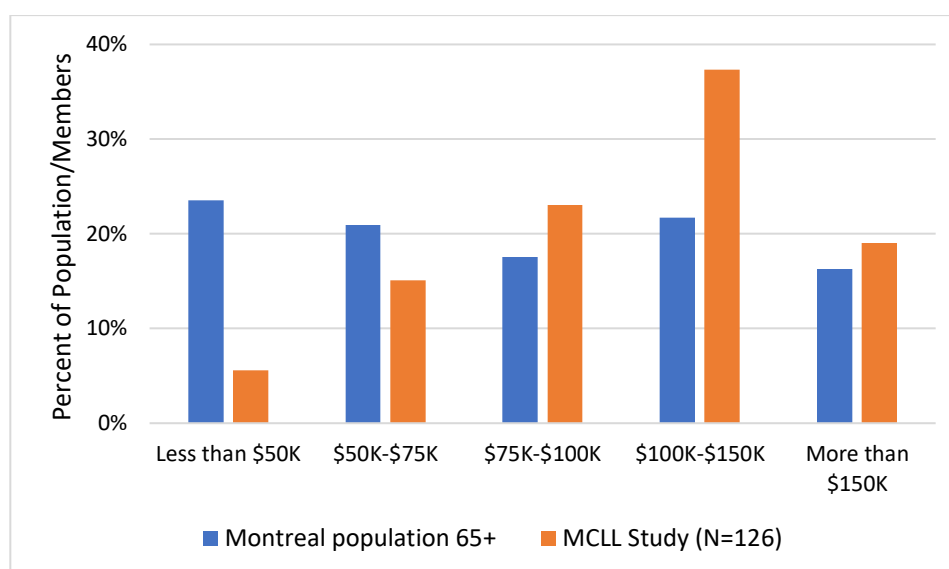
Income range	Count	Percentage
Less than \$50K	7	3.6%
\$50K-\$75K	19	9.8%
\$75K-\$100K	29	14.9%
\$100K-\$150K	47	24.2%
More than \$150K	24	12.4%
Prefer not to answer	68	35.1%

Comparisons with the Montreal population are informative, even if not perfectly aligned.

For example, the average income for individuals living in Montreal, aged 65+, is 37,600\$ Annually (2016 Census).

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110023901&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.15&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.8&pickMembers%5B2%5D=3.1&pickMembers%5B3%5D=4.1>

For family income, comparisons with the Montreal population aged 65+ are shown in Figure 6. For both individuals as well as family units, MCLL members have substantially higher income levels than the general population of Montreal.

Figure 6. Comparison of Annual Family Incomes

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dt-td/Rp-eng.cfm?TABID=2>

e) Donor History and Preferences

The survey probed members' donor history as well as their plans with regard to giving to MCLL and to McGill University. When asked whether they had donated to MCLL in the past, 22.1% of respondents (N=393) indicate that they have. With regard to their intentions for 2020, Table 8 shows that approximately one-quarter plan to definitely make a donation or to give if there is a project/cause of interest. Just over one-third of respondents report that they are uncertain.

Table 8. Intention to donate to MCLL in 2020 (N=394)

Response	Count	Percentage
Definitely	38	9.6%
Yes, if I find a project/cause that appeals to me	61	15.5%
No	151	38.3%
Uncertain	144	36.5%

When donor behaviour was reviewed in light of duration of MCLL membership, an increased length of time as a member corresponds with greater likelihood to have donated or the intention to donate this year. When reviewed in light of affiliation with McGill, individuals who have no link with the University outside of their membership in MCLL are dramatically less likely to support MCLL financially.

Almost twice as many respondents, 43.3%, report that they have donated to McGill University (other than MCLL) in the past (N=393). In the same vein, Table 9 shows that just over 30% plan to definitely make a donation to McGill University in 2020 or to give if there is a project/cause of interest.

Table 9. Intention to donate to McGill University in 2020 (N=393)

Answer	Count	Percentage
Definitely	81	20.6%
Yes, if I find a project/cause that appeals to me	40	10.2%
No	179	45.5%
Uncertain	93	23.7%

As anticipated, graduates of McGill are the most likely affiliation group to have donated to the University in the past or to intend to do so in 2020, although those with a family connection also show a strong donor history and intention.

f) Effects of MCLL on Members' Lives

When asked about life events that had influenced survey respondents to join MCLL, the most common response (just over two-thirds of the total) is, not surprisingly, retirement. Table 10, however, shows that other triggers have prompted members to join. In the

“Other” category, “interest to continue learning” is the most common response added; this aspect was strongly brought forward in focus group discussions.

Table 10. Life events influencing decision to join MCLL (N=543*)

Life events	Count	Percentage
Retirement	319	67.2%
Loss of a spouse/partner	30	6.4%
Move to Montreal	47	9.9%
No specific life event	75	15.8%
<i>Other</i>	72	15.2%

- Note: # responses (543) exceeds # respondents (487) as some respondents indicated more than one choice.

Respondents provide multiple positive impacts of MCLL on their lives. Table 11 shows the breakdown of all responses with intellectual stimulation and social interaction being the most popular choices. When pressed to pick the most significant positive impact, almost three-quarters of respondents select intellectual stimulation, as seen in Table 12, although focus group discussions reinforced the critical value of the social interaction aspects.

Table 11. Positive impacts of MCLL (N=1191*)

Impacts	Count	Percentage
Intellectual stimulation	398	33.4%
Social interaction with others	332	27.9%
Physical activity-gets me out of the house	169	14.2%
Personal growth	257	21.6%
<i>Other</i>	35	2.9%

- Note: # responses (1191) exceeds # respondents (445) as some respondents indicated more than one choice.

Table 12. Most significant positive impact of MCLL (N=414)

Most significant impact	Count	Percentage
Intellectual stimulation	307	74.2%
Social interaction with others	58	14.0%
Physical activity - gets me out of the house	13	3.1%
Personal growth	28	6.8%
<i>Other</i>	8	1.9%

Quotations from focus group discussions bring life to the numbers above:

MCLL has opened windows for me into new worlds that I never knew existed. [...] always a new window, always a new world.

MCLL gave me [...] a real reason, [...] but it's also about the communication: the friendships that I've made here that have opened my eyes. They're different to my other friends and other connections, where you start on something and it leads you to this and it leads you to things that you wouldn't normally maybe come upon by yourself.

This has really made my retirement special.

I would say the main benefit is [MCLL] widened my horizons.

g) Peer Learning Model

A significant topic of discussion in the focus group sessions relates to learning approaches at MCLL. Peer learning has been a cornerstone at MCLL since its inception—but peer learning can have many interpretations. Some believe that peer learning requires that each member of a study group make a presentation on the topic; others take more flexible approaches. Most members, however, strongly believe that the integration of significant discussion is a key component to peer learning—and that peer learning, with this as a defining feature, remains a unique and important feature of MCLL.

In recent times, MCLL study group descriptions specify three approaches so that learners can select according to their preference:

- Member presentation required and participant involvement in discussion expected
- Member presentation not required but participant involvement in discussion expected
- Primarily moderator led

Most focus group members voice support for the acceptance of a diversity of learning styles and preferences for the extent of participation by study group members. Others feel that they have benefitted from being “forced” to make a class presentation. There is, however, agreement that study group topics and approaches need to be clearly described in the calendar—and then adhered to.

Study groups are moderated by volunteers and are vetted by the MCLL Curriculum Committee. Focus group participants largely recognize the challenges faced by moderators and appreciate the work done by these colleagues. They do, however, recommend that more fulsome training be available to moderators, especially new ones, in areas such as older adults’ learning, use of educational technologies, and engaging members in discussion.

Some focus group participants have, of course, been moderators, either currently or in the past—and well know the challenges and benefits of stepping into this role. There were some troubling moments when past moderators shared difficulties that they had

experienced—and indicated that they do not plan to repeat the experience. As well, the researchers encountered moments in which it appeared that a small minority of members interpret peer learning as meaning that “anything goes” and demonstrate disrespectful behaviour to others around the table, raising questions as to whether this type of behaviour occurs during study group sessions and whether a code of conduct would be helpful.

Again, hearing representative voices of learners adds richness to the data:

I think the most effective groups are the discussion groups, from my limited experience here, for a number of reasons. One, everybody gets involved so they feel invested in the course. Two, there's a social interaction that I think is really important in this organization. And three, I think you probably learn the most. [...] rather than being a passive receptor, you're actually trying to articulate your ideas on an issue.

I think [the peer learning aspect] is very important because we've got such a varied background. Everyone has got all this experience and it's a chance to make the most of all this varied experience.

I think it's nice having the options that people can opt in or opt out to the type of group learning, with their different styles of learning, just as there are different styles of teaching. I think having diverse methods is really important.”

Peer learning for me is very important. Very important. I think it's what sets MCLL apart from other groups around the world, around the nation. It is really unique.

h) Engagement with MCLL and McGill

As a volunteer-based organization, MCLL depends heavily on capable individuals taking on a wide range of roles. When asked whether about volunteering with MCLL, respondents indicate an impressive array of current active volunteer activities (Table 13) and/or past volunteer activities (Table 14). As respondents were asked to select all of the appropriate choices in these questions, some individuals can act in more than one

volunteer capacity. Overall, 29.5% of respondents indicate that they are currently volunteers with MCLL and 35.1% have volunteered in the past.

Table 13. Current volunteer activities with MCLL (N=477)

Current volunteer activities	Count	Percentage
I am not currently an active volunteer with MCLL	322	67.5%
I am currently moderating a study group	52	10.9%
I am currently a member of Council	13	2.7%
I am currently a member of an MCLL Committee	28	5.9%
I am currently an office volunteer	13	2.7%
<i>Other</i>	49	10.3%

- Note: # responses (477) exceeds # respondents (457) as some respondents indicated more than one choice.

Table 14. Past volunteer activities with MCLL (N=530)

Past volunteer activities	Count	Percentage
I have not been an active volunteer with MCLL	300	56.6%
I have moderated a study group in the past	90	17.0%
I have been a member of Council in the past	27	5.1%
I have been a member of an MCLL Committee in the past	52	9.8%
I have been an office volunteer in the past	20	3.8%
<i>Other</i>	41	7.7%

- Note: # responses (530) exceeds # respondents (462) as some respondents indicated more than one choice.

Volunteer history of respondents with McGill University differs markedly from their contributions (past and present) to MCLL. Only 9% indicate that they currently volunteer for the University and 14.3% state that they have done so in the past (most frequently for the annual McGill Book Fair).

i) Relationship with McGill: Past, Current and Desired

As seen in Table 15, over two-thirds (69.4%) of survey respondents have some affiliation to McGill University beyond their membership in MCLL. Almost one-half

(46.7%) are themselves graduates and many have a connection through a family member. Donor history and intentions towards McGill University reported previously are very likely related to the high level of affiliation with the University.

Table 15. Affiliation with McGill University (N=573*)

Affiliation with McGill	Count	Percentage
I am a graduate of McGill University	185	46.4%
One (or more) of my children is a graduate of McGill University	132	33.1%
One (or more) of my grandchildren is a graduate of McGill University of is currently attending McGill University	33	8.3%
A close family member (mother/father/brother/sister) is a graduate of McGill University	102	25.6%
I do not have any affiliation with McGill University beyond my membership in MCLL	121	30.3%

- Note: # responses (573) exceeds # respondents (396) as some respondents indicated more than one choice.

Focus group discussions reveal nuanced reactions to a question regarding what the affiliation with McGill University adds to MCLL. Many participants believe that being a part of a university, especially one with such a strong brand and reputation as McGill, is very important in ensuring quality (or at least a perception of quality), although significant opinion to the contrary, i.e. that it doesn't really matter, was also expressed. Focus group participants clearly appreciate the connection with the McGill library system and many recognize the value of the support provided through the School of Continuing Studies. Appreciation was also voiced for being in a university environment that exposes MCLL members to other activities going on at McGill and to younger students who daily use the same building as MCLL members.

MCLL members, however, desire to have a much stronger relationship with McGill than simply as donors. The focus group discussions consistently revealed that many members believe that there could be a great deal of mutual benefit with more integrated approaches. As demonstrated in the career data above (section c), there is a great deal of resident experience and expertise within MCLL that could be taken advantage of by McGill.

Members describe ways in which this expertise is currently being shared, as well as ideas about more effective connections. Examples of current activities shared by focus group participants include:

- SPEAK program in which MCLL volunteers meet with students in School of Continuing Studies language programs for the purpose of practice through conversation;
- A study group on African Development that invited students in a Business course to present their proposed business plans to this experienced group of seniors for critique and feedback before they presented them for grading; in addition, an MCLL member aided one of the students to gain funding for his project.
- Limited involvement in academic projects

Creative ideas shared by focus group participants for ways in which MCLL members could contribute more effectively to the McGill community include:

- Mentorship programs for students
- Companionship/orientation to Montreal for newcomers

- Community outreach
- Academic support (e.g. through pitches, incubators, practice)
- Opening of some study groups to McGill students
- Participants in research projects
- Intergenerational learning opportunities

Focus group discussions also reveal that members have ideas about ways in which McGill could support more effectively the work of MCLL. For one, they would appreciate more exposure to the intellectual resources of McGill, especially by having faculty/graduate students share their knowledge/research/interests through lecture or study group formats. This concept might also provide benefits to graduate students who need teaching opportunities. Second, members express that space issues, especially physical accessibility, are very real constraints for MCLL—and would like for McGill to recognize and address these concerns. Third, there was considerable discussion in the focus groups about the lack of opportunity to audit credit courses at McGill, unlike many other Canadian universities. Fourth, several focus group participants referred back to a conference that MCLL organized several years ago—and the recommendations that emerged from these sessions, particularly about McGill embracing the concept of becoming an Age-Friendly University, that seems to have had limited follow-up. Members are very aware that lifelong learning is much discussed by Canadian universities and would like to see McGill operationalize this complex concept.

Following are voices of focus group participants that speak to the issues of lifelong learning and the relationship between MCLL and McGill University:

I think MCLL is probably a very good public relations gimmick for the university to get to show people that McGill really participates in the life of the city. [...] It shows that McGill is open to a community of people who are not in the academic [bubble].

It would be good for McGill's reputation, as students come from all over the world to study here, to include seniors. Higher education for your whole life, not just up to a cut-off point. That [McGill] is an all-inclusive learning environment for your whole life.

There could be more opportunities for collaboration/integration because if you sat down and did a demographics of the people in MCLL--their work experience, their life experience, where they lived--and looked at the mass of life experience that you have, there are a number of courses here could take advantage of that to help their students.

..There is a devaluation of the opinion or the knowledge of people that are now retired and no longer in the mainstream on the job.

I think one of the things we'd hoped would come about through the seminar on aging, which MCLL initiated, was to influence the administration and the Board about the importance of facing up to the rapidly changing demographics and to the notions such as intergenerational studies and lifelong learning. All of these things need to be brought to the table. I think it unfortunately sort of petered out. I know behind the scenes there are some things going on, but there was a moment which, and I think that McGill could have seized that [moment], it could have played a leadership role along with many other universities around the world, in addressing the issues related to the enormous shifts which are taking place, with regard to the demographics of people's desire to develop second careers.

[Lifelong learning] is part of a career plan and that's what McGill should be talking about and infusing lifelong learning into that career plan.

j) Potential Improvements for MCLL

The survey allowed for respondents to make open-ended suggestions for improvements to MCLL. Table 16 provides a thematic representation of these comments, along with the frequency with which they appear. These suggestions can provide guidance to the MCLL Executive regarding factors that may require attention.

Table 16. Respondents' suggestions for improvements to MCLL (N=377)

Themes of Comments	Count
No improvement needed	106
Improvements needed re moderators/moderator training	53
Improvements needed re physical space/accessibility/class size	42
Greater variety of topics/workshops/outings/physical activities	36
Improvements needed re equipment/IT	22
Improvements needed re registration process	18
More discussion in study groups	14
Fewer required presentations	13
Describe study groups more accurately in the calendar	10
Higher intellectual quality in study groups	9
More lectures available	9
More opportunities for intergenerational learning	7
More advertising	5
Greater diversity in membership	5
More required presentations	5
More study groups in French	4
Online/recorded options	4
Frustration that social exclusivity can exist within MCLL	4
Ability to audit McGill credit courses	3
Provide background/introduction to moderator with study group description	3
Disallow food in classes	3
Ability to take more than 2 study groups per term	2
Other comments (mentioned by only 1 respondent)	77

Focus group discussions reinforced many of the items in Table 11.

k) Marketing MCLL

Marketing educational opportunities is a consistent challenge for University Continuing Education and, in particular, differentiating programs in a location such as Montreal that affords a variety of options. Not surprisingly, focus group discussions indicate that, overwhelmingly, participants first learned about MCLL by word of mouth. Other media

(e.g. internet, and to a lesser extent, print materials such as newsletters and brochures) provide support. Focus group participants also recommend that members share MCLL information through their own Facebook sites to bring greater attention to what is happening. They also encourage using images (MCLL website, brochures, etc.) that demonstrate vitality and stimulation rather than passivity.

One survey question invited respondents to indicate aspects of MCLL that they would recommend if they were to make an endorsement of MCLL. Table 17 provides a thematic overview of the open-ended comments provided by respondents that may be considered in marketing materials.

Table 17. Respondents' recommendations to others regarding MCLL (N=401)

Themes of Comments	Count
Intellectual stimulation	102
Social interaction/great quality of members	70
Overall great thing to do	59
Good selection of topics	44
Personal growth	36
Recommend choosing SGs based on style of class and moderator	26
Highlight peer learning model	19
Tolerant environment	15
Benefits of getting out of house	6
Low cost	4
Benefits of library access	2
Would not recommend MCLL	1
Other	17

5. Discussion and Recommendations

In this section, the Findings above are considered in light of the goals of the study and recommendations that emerge from the data are presented.

1. To more clearly understand the demographics of the current MCLL membership.

The McGill Community for Lifelong Learning is a connected group of approximately 1000 individuals living within the greater Montreal area. Breakdowns of gender and age provided in the Findings section are not surprising; data regarding marital status and, in particular, living arrangements, add to our understanding. With just under half of the members living alone, the importance of social interaction is entirely logical—and requires prominence in programming and planning. Duration of membership, with almost 44% having been part of MCLL for more than five years, can be interpreted as a positive signal regarding satisfaction.

Issues regarding diversity emerge from the Findings. A smaller percentage of respondents were born in Canada than for the population of Montreal as a whole, but the proportion of anglophones is much higher than for the general population. The representation of francophones and individuals whose mother tongue is neither French nor English is much lower than in the population of Montreal as a whole.

The high levels of education amongst the membership, almost half of whom have achieved a Masters or Doctoral degree, is clearly a defining feature of MCLL. Likewise,

the experience gained through a wide array of top-level careers that members have held, holds important implications for expectations of members, as well as their ability to contribute to the broader McGill community, as discussed later.

The reality that university-based continuing education programs, of which MCLL is a particular example, tend to attract and benefit individuals who already have high levels of education and career success, is an ongoing tension within the field. Much has been written about the need to extend the resources of continuing education to underprivileged communities and to demystify “the university” for those who may be intimidated by the idea of an institution of higher learning. MCLL faces this challenge as well. Educational and income levels of the membership are considerably higher than those of the population as a whole. Likewise, linguistic and cultural distinctions exist. While not necessarily undesirable, these data do present an opportunity for MCLL to reflect on the composition of its current membership and to make an informed decision as to whether, as some members suggest, there is a need to diversify and, if so, to determine ways of encouraging greater diversity.

Recommendation 1.1

The issue of diversity of the MCLL membership should be consciously addressed. This item should be added to the workplan of the 20-21 Council and an appropriate mechanism for exploration be developed, for example, a symposium of members and external voices.

A further issue that fits within the topic of diversity and accessibility, relates to accommodation within the learning approaches and spaces for individuals experiencing

physical challenges. With the identification that one third of members experiencing reduced mobility, hearing or sight, this may be an appropriate time to reflect on whether appropriate accommodations are in place or whether additional initiatives are needed to enable current members or to attract new members who are experiencing physical challenges.

Recommendation 1.2

Include in the discussion of diversity and accessibility the question of whether enhanced accommodation, for example in learning spaces or learning approaches, is needed for individuals with physical challenges.

2. To understand the ways in which learning (through MCLL) impacts the well-being (e.g. intellectual, social, physical, mental) of MCLL members.

This study clearly demonstrates that, while there are improvements that can be made to MCLL, members experience immense benefit to their post-retirement lives as a result of participation in MCLL. Survey results as well as consistent sentiments expressed during focus groups are reinforced by membership duration and volunteer data. Although intellectual stimulation is the top value selected when members are pressed to choose the most significant benefit, other aspects such as social interaction with others (clearly critical for many), personal growth and getting out of one's own environment are highly regarded as well. These data support the conclusions of other writers, as outlined in Section 2, but add the dimension of the voices of older learners and their personal expressions of what MCLL brings to their lives.

Recommendation 2.1

In planning for the future of MCLL programs and services, the importance of social interaction for a significant percentage of members should be top of mind.

Recommendation 2.2

The immense benefits expressed by MCLL members need to be clearly communicated both within the University community, for example to senior leadership as a prime example of McGill's community impact, as well as externally, for example in recruitment efforts.

3. To understand what MCLL members perceive that they need from McGill University and how they believe they can contribute to McGill.

Interestingly, although members were questioned about both aspects of this goal, the majority of the discussion focused on what members believe they can contribute to, rather than what they need from, McGill University. Members generally believe that McGill's reputation and quality standards reflect well on the organization and they hugely appreciate the connection with the McGill libraries, although there is significant sentiment that MCLL is lost in the larger university structure and priorities.

These are engaged individuals. Almost two-thirds have a connection with McGill beyond MCLL, with almost half having graduated from McGill. Approximately one-third of respondents currently volunteer or have volunteered for MCLL in the past.

Although the level of volunteerism by members within MCLL is much higher than with other aspects of McGill, patterns of donation behaviour differ markedly. Members are

much more likely to donate to McGill than they are to MCLL, perhaps partially explained by the loyalty of graduates. High levels of uncertainty regarding intention to donate to MCLL, however, raises questions as to whether members are clear on projects/how their funds would be used.

Recommendation 3.1

If MCLL wishes to establish a strong culture of giving, there is a need to address necessary steps, including being very clear and explicit about how donations will be used.

Not surprisingly, the issue of space for MCLL was the one most frequently mentioned in the context of what MCLL needs from the larger University. In particular, space that would allow for less crowded classes and accommodation for members with physical challenges was emphasized. Given that space limitation is an ongoing constraint for McGill, perhaps internal resources could be mobilized to provide expert advice on maximizing current MCLL spaces.

Recommendation 3.2

McGill University, through the appropriate office, review the space currently allocated to MCLL and the utilization of that space, with a view to considering the emerging needs of the organization with regard to class size and accommodation for learners with physical challenges.

MCLL members are self-aware and, in particular, are conscious of the experience and expertise that resides within the organization, as evidenced by high education levels and impressive career backgrounds. They are proud of the ways in which they already

contribute to the broader University, for example, volunteering as language partners with School of Continuing Studies language students (SPEAK program), through selected academic connections (Africa Development course with the Faculty of Management) and mentorship opportunities (SCS students). But there is a widely-held sense that they can, and would very much like to, contribute further to the broader academic community and a sense of frustration that the resources of MCLL are not more effectively valued and drawn upon by the University.

The University has recently established a Working Group on Lifelong Learning that is charged with making recommendations regarding lifelong learning at McGill. As part of its deliberations, intergenerational learning has been an important consideration. MCLL presents a golden opportunity for growing intergenerational learning at McGill, as well as for helping the University demonstrate its capacity to respond effectively to the 100 year lifespan.

Recommendation 3.3

Initiate discussions between appropriate partners at McGill and MCLL about closer integration and ways in which MCLL could contribute more fully through initiatives such as: mentorship programs for students; companionship/orientation to Montreal for newcomers; community outreach; supervised and appropriate academic support (e.g. through pitches, incubators, practice); opening of some study groups to McGill students; participation in research projects; providing opportunities for graduate students and faculty to present their areas of study and interest; other intergenerational learning opportunities.

Considerable frustration was also expressed at the lack of action following a very successful conference on lifelong learning organized by MCLL in 2017 that generated much discussion and many recommendations, in particular, regarding McGill joining the international Age Friendly University community.

Recommendation 3.4

McGill University explore the Age Friendly University concept and determine whether McGill can commit to joining this organization.

4. To understand what senior McGill leadership perceive that McGill can contribute to MCLL and how they believe that McGill can benefit from having MCLL as part of McGill.

The COVID19 pandemic that reached Canada just after the survey was implemented and focus groups conducted has certainly had an impact on this component of our study. Senior University leadership have been focusing on fundamental concerns of the institution and, as such, have had limited time to consult. Nevertheless, discussions that took place provided insightful input to the study.

MCLL has demonstrated a strong desire for closer integration with the broader University community and has put forward compelling ideas in this regard that have solicited interest on the part of University officials. Other possibilities raised include a role for MCLL in helping the University implement the concept of a 60-year curriculum, including the provision of learning opportunities for older adults who wish to continue

working on a full or part-time basis. Or, perhaps, enlarging the circle of MCLL to include extra-career learning for all ages.

The other side of closer integration, however, may be a lessening of autonomy and a need for greater volunteer leadership and participation in new initiatives. Ideas around closer integration with SCS and McGill prompts a number of questions that MCLL will need to work through. For example: Is MCLL prepared to expand its mandate from a focus on post-retirement learning to a more broad concept? Or could a more all-encompassing focus be achieved through partnerships? Is MCLL prepared to participate more fully in the academic life of the School of Continuing Studies through, for example, a formal link with the Associate Dean, Learner Services or Associate Dean, Academic Affairs? Is MCLL prepared to have a seat at the SCS Academic Committee? Are MCLL members, many of whom voiced support for increased integration with the broader university, prepared to take on leadership roles for new initiatives?

Recommendation 4.1

MCLL should carefully consider whether closer integration with SCS and the broader University community is mutually beneficial and, if so, what mechanisms and initiatives are desirable and manageable for a volunteer-driven organization.

Closely connected to the discussion above is the question of how MCLL relates to other organizations/initiatives within McGill University, for example, the McGill University

Retirees Association (MURA), and an emerging Intergenerational McGill initiative that is part of an innovation called Building 21.

Recommendation 4.2

MCLL should maintain close relationships with relevant McGill organizations/initiatives such as MURA, Intergenerational McGill, Office of Community Relations (Communications and External Relations), Working Group on Lifelong Learning to ensure that there is collaboration.

Recommendation 4.3

MCLL should maintain close relationships with relevant McGill organizations/initiatives such as Faculty-based career resource centres, Healthy Living Annex, SSMU and Faculty-based student associations to develop partnerships for new initiatives.

5. To understand the preferences of MCLL members regarding learning models and options (e.g. peer learning, intergenerational learning, technology assisted learning).

MCLL members are highly supportive of maintaining peer learning as a pillar of the organization. As long as the variation of “peer learning” includes the opportunity for significant discussion and input by learners, however, there is widespread acceptance of different approaches to accommodate the preferences of learners, especially with regard to the requirement (or not) of individual presentations in study groups. Members do request clarity in calendar descriptions and adherence to the course descriptions. A members’ workshop on peer learning in October 2018 also generated a number of ideas and initiatives.

Recommendation 5.1

Continue to embrace the peer learning model that includes opportunity for significant discussion by participants as a pillar of MCLL, but also to refine the model and its variations according to the needs and preferences of MCLL members.

Recommendation 5.2

Ensure that calendar descriptions of study groups explain the approach, i.e. participant presentation expected (or not) or largely instructor led. Also ensure that descriptions are adhered to.

The face-to-face model has also been a pillar for MCLL. Given the significance of social connectivity for MCLL members, this is no surprise. However, given the issues of physical challenges and, more recently, limitations on social contact due to COVID19, the enhanced use of technology to deliver MCLL programming and to build connections with other learning groups for older adults should be considered.

Recommendation 5.3

MCLL should further explore the enhanced use of technology as a means of enhancing learners' digital literacy as well as for the delivery of services and programming, both in-class and through distance delivery.

MCLL members appreciate greatly the volunteer moderators and their efforts that make possible the core of the MCLL offerings. There were, however, many calls for additional support for moderators in the form of training related to aspects such as older adult learning, use of technology, engaging learners.

Recommendation 5.4

MCLL should provide enhanced support for moderators, both classroom-based and remote, in the form of training related to aspects such as older adult learning, use of technology, engaging learners.

6. Other Matters

Many suggestions raised by participants in the study, outlined in Table 16, are covered in the previous recommendations. Table 16 is, however, a useful source of data for the 20-21 Council as well as those of the future.

Recommendation 6.1

MCLL Council for 20-21 and beyond should carefully consider members' recommendations for improvement outlined in Table 16 when developing their workplan for the year.

Although marketing and recruitment for MCLL were not specific goals for the study, there is considerable material, e.g. members' feedback on how MCLL benefits their lives, where they look for information as well as the direct quotations, that can be used in shaping messaging and tools of promotion.

Recommendation 6.2

MCLL Council and SCS marketing specialists should use material from this report that directly reflects the MCLL target group for new promotional strategies.

Finally, as the MCLL Council and Executive change annually, specific measures are required to ensure the continuity of this report

Recommendation 6.3

- To ensure that the learnings and the recommendations from this report are carried forward, the MCLL Council and Executive, starting in 2020-21, should review the report annually and build appropriate actions into their annual work plans. It is also recommended that the MCLL President should build and maintain strong relationships with the SCS Associate Dean, Learner Success and Associate Dean, Academic Affairs.

Concluding Comments

This study, *University-Based Approaches for Older Adults: Adapting Universities for the 100-year Lifespan*, makes a number of important contributions to questions related to seniors' learning and, more broadly, seniors' health and well-being. At the level of the specific organization used as a case study, the McGill Community for Lifelong Learning, the work has generated comprehensive data that can be used for planning purposes and for the continuous improvement of MCLL for years to come. At the institutional level, the report provides insights and recommendations with regard to ways in which this demographic can make enhanced contributions to the university community as well as ways in which the university can more effectively support this valued component of its student body. Finally, this research project adds to the literature on seniors learning and the role of our universities specifically by highlighting the insights, concerns and voices of older adults with a passion for learning.

As Principal Investigator, I wish to express my sincere thanks to the MCLL Advisory Committee that provided much-appreciated guidance throughout this research project.

Members include Sandra Baines, Lorne Huston, Ana Milic and Leslie Paris. And, of course, thanks to the MCLL members who provided their insights through participation in the survey and/or focus groups; likewise, appreciation to McGill colleagues who agreed to interviews regarding important aspects of the study. Special thanks to Lorne Huston, the 2019-20 President of MCLL, who gave wise counsel and whose strong support made this work possible. In addition, special thanks to our super Research Assistant, Kailee Wark, for her tireless efforts and important insights.

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