



Off-Campus Housing and Job Bank
ANNUAL REPORT
2013/14

HOJO Timeline

1984

The CUSA Job Bank service was open only for the summer. Students could look at postings, or if a job needed to be filled the Job Bank contacted students. Opened as the Federal Student Employment Centre on Campus the service was often criticized as bureaucratic and unresponsive to the needs of the majority of students.

1988

CUSA Housing Service opened in collaboration with the already running Off-Campus Housing Service of the Dean of Student's Office. The service's focus was on finding affordable housing for students, offering apartment listings on a bulletin board and free phones to contact landlords.

Also in 1988, the CUSA Job Bank was computerized.

1989

1989 The CUSA Housing Service expanded to include promoting tenant rights information and assistance to students.

1991

1991 CUSA Housing Service offered its first Housing Handbook. The CUSA Housing Service and CUSA Job Bank were offered in the same room, H-637.

1997

Even as far back as 1997, the CCSL provided some funding to our services.



Mission & Values

The Concordia Student Union Off-Campus Housing and Job Bank (HOJO) works to empower, educate and support the Concordia community by providing reliable housing and employment information, resources and referrals. We encourage a proactive approach towards finding adequate housing, part-time and summer employment.

The CSU Off-Campus Housing & Job Bank is guided by the following core values:

We respect the dignity and rights of all beneficiaries of HOJO services.

We recognize that students have unique needs with respect to their time and budgetary constraints.

The main means we use to achieve our objectives is our staff; the personalized interaction offered is a major strength in dealing with sometimes difficult situations.

The transparent exchange of information, ideas, knowledge and values is essential to the achievement of our mission.

The management of HOJO is done with openness and integrity; we are accountable to the students of Concordia University.

We believe that continuous improvement enabled by client feedback is essential to maintaining the high quality of our services.

We ensure the right to confidentiality and privacy with respect to information provided to us by students.

We recognize that some governmental organizations may have limitations of scope with regards to meeting the unique needs of students in both official languages. Therefore we cater our services with this in mind.

HOJO is a service that is centered on students' needs. We strive to support students in learning about and exercising their rights as tenants and employees.



Letter to the CCSL

Dear CCSL Members,

We would take this time to express our gratitude for the continued support of the Concordia Council on Student Life. Your support has directly facilitated students' access to our services and expanded our capacity to address serious issues facing tenants across Montreal. This year we have continued to grow in an effort to meet the rising tide of inadequate, dangerous, and exploitative housing. We have expanded our tenant information workshops for new students, translating numerous documents into Mandarin to make our services more accessible, and continue to spearhead anti-vermin campaigns. At the same time we continue to confront long standing student housing trends including a greater reliance on digital mediums and social media for legal information, a continued city-wide bed bug problem that particularly affects highly mobile and impoverished students, and the growing diversity of our student body. There is no prototypical Concordia student; we are made up of international, out of province, and Quebec residents, who are Francophone, Anglophone, and Allophone, we are parents, visible minorities, Queer and Cisgendered, part time, full time, and unemployed. Not only is this diversity our greatest strength it serves as a living model for the kind of society our student body is building of the future.

Our University's slogan is real education for the real world and this involves confronting real world issues such as housing discrimination, theft and fraud, and student poverty. None of these issues have easy answers and theory alone will not address the needs of the Concordia student body. With the support of the CCSL the Concordia Student Union Off Campus Housing and Job Bank can proactively campaign for all of the members of our community in ways that continue to produce real results for our health and safety.

Thank you again for your support and for the opportunities you have provided to the Concordia student body. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We have great hope for what our continued working relationship can accomplish in the next year.

The HOJO Team

The HOJO
Team for
2013-2014
was

Leanne Ashworth
Qincheng Zhang
Anita Lambton
Kyle McLoughlin
Hannah Brais
Jiao Xie
Grace Lee
Juwairia Awan
Michaela Holt
Nadia Prevost-Lowry

Highlights

ACCOMPANYING STUDENTS TO THE RÉGIE DU LOGEMENT

In addition to helping students work through difficult housing situations in office, HOJO employees have been able to accompany students to their hearings at the Régie du Logement. This has proved beneficial as employees can A) provide support for students who have never been to court before and are unsure of what to expect and B) learn more about how the Régie du Logement works in order to better inform students about how to properly prepare for their hearings. Exposure to a variety of different hearings gives HOJO employees experience which is active and relevant, and it benefits students to have employees accompany them, often boosting their confidence especially if it is their first time in court. HOJO prioritizes international students and student's who are not native french (or english) speakers, as attending a hearing can be extra intimidating if it is not conducted in the student's first language.

OUTREACH

Over the last year Hojo has increased its visibility and outreach throughout the Concordia community, appearing in a number of different publications and settings. Hojo has been featured in the CSU newsletter which is sent out regularly to students. There was also a 3 page HOJO spread in the ISO pre-departure guide which informs incoming international students about their rights as a tenant, and alerting them about potential bad landlord practices. This is a great improvement from previous years when HOJO was allotted only 1 page. HOJO was included in the email to grad students sent out by Concordia University in August, informing students about our office and upcoming workshops.

CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS & STUDENT-LED RESEARCH PROJECT

HOJO was also able to conduct classroom presentations for urban planning classes, which focused on safety, sanitation, city inspectors and the practices of the Régie du Logement. These presentations proved to be particularly fruitful, as they resulted in a student-led outreach project in which students investigated various buildings neighbouring the SGW campus and interviewed students about their living situations.

PLANNING FOR INTERNSHIP POSITIONS

An exciting new development in HOJO this year was the creation of internship positions. Due to the success of the Urban Planning student-led research project, HOJO was able to brainstorm and plan for a number positions which would be available for Summer 2014. Creating these positions, which essentially acted as specialized research projects, required a great amount of planning and attention to detail.

WORKSHOPS & INFO SESSIONS

HOJO has continued to conduct workshops and info sessions for students in both English and Mandarin. HOJO was also able to do an external presentation at ACCM during the community drop-in hours, as requested by a student volunteer at the program.

Highlights

INCREASED PRIORITIZATION OF MANDARIN-SPEAKING STUDENTS

Over the last year HOJO has expanded its team to include two Mandarin-speaking students who are able to provide services in Mandarin 4 days per week and ensure that Chinese Students, a group which is particularly vulnerable to illegal housing practices, are able to access important information despite language barriers. Hojo's information postcards which have been translated into Mandarin include; Basic Facts about renting in Quebec, Help with Bedbugs, Protecting your Private Information, Heating problems, Montreal Rental Averages by Neighbourhood. These postcards have been distributed to the Concordia Chinese Student Association and the International Student's Office, and nearly 1000 postcards were asked for during the ISO Orientation for Chinese Students.

WORKING WITH CONCORDIA SECURITY ON DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

We collaborated with preventionist Lyne Denis on a number of occasions when students who needed to better understand how to work with police in order to ensure safety and security in their homes. This was particularly relevant for students who had recently moved to Quebec and were unsure about the role police can play in helping to resolve situations. It can be both reassuring and empowering for students to speak with someone knowledgeable and experienced with police protocol.

CONTINUING OUR FOCUS ON TRAINING

HOJO was able to receive valuable training this year, including a session with Project Genesis regarding strategies for putting pressure in the Régie du Logement to improve wait times for tenants. HOJO also had the privilege of receiving Sensitivity Training conducted by the Center for Gender Advocacy, which has improved employee knowledge about respecting intersectionality among co-workers and with students.

CASE STUDY: PRIVATE STUDENT RESIDENCE

Shortly after the start of the fall semester in 2013 a group of three students came into the Housing and Job Bank; from a privately run student residence opened recently near the downtown campus. The residence promised fully furnished rooms with luxury amenities in a shared space at a price well above the average for an entire apartment in downtown Montreal. The inclusive nature of the accommodations advertised by this residence attracted international and out of province students who were new to the city and looking for a simple solution to meet their housing needs.

When the students arrived at the Residence they found the accommodations were still in the middle of major renovations; amenities such as Internet, telephone service, and in some cases lighting were still being installed. The halls and communal spaces were filled with construction materials and workers who would begin construction before 7am and in some cases continuing to well after 7pm. Furthermore, most of the rooms were missing the promised furnishings such as tables, chairs, couches, and televisions. Many students had to move in and assemble their own beds.

The HOJO informed the students of the obligations of the lessor to fulfill the terms of the contract or to compensate the lessee for the lack of promised amenities and services.

Campaigns

CAMPAIGN ON HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

Our housing discrimination awareness campaign continued throughout 2013-14. We regularly receive students who are dealing with issues that stem from discrimination for various reasons, but our message to them is consistent. We let them know that being treated differently due to status, race, language or religion is not permitted. Landlords have to follow the provincial housing regulations for all students and we show where this kind of information can be found from official sources. We want students to be aware of the problem, particularly in the Ville-Marie area. We let them know how we are able to assist them and that they are not alone.

RIGHT TO PRIVACY CAMPAIGN

Each year HOJO discusses the importance of keeping confidential information safe when applying for apartments. We also provide ways to try and retrieve and destroy already collected private information. This campaign continues to grow as this information is disproportionately demanded of certain students in certain neighborhoods. International students in particular are often asked to provide copies of their passport, study permits, and other travel documents. The right to privacy ties into discrimination as well, since the more private information a landlord or employer may have, the more reason they may have to refuse the student.

HEATING CAMPAIGN

We continue to distribute information for students on how to deal with their heating issues. This problem is especially urgent and too many students spend Montreal Winters without adequate heating in their apartments. We provide the necessary information of how to record temperatures and help students in demanding necessary repairs.

BED BUGS CAMPAIGN

The bedbug problem continues especially for tenants and travelers in Montreal. HOJO focuses on raising awareness and knowledge about bedbugs and how to deal with them in an effective way. We provide resources and support to students on how to report the problem and how to ensure the correct protocol is followed. Many landlords will try to solve bedbug infestations using household products despite the fact that the most effective chemicals to use against bedbugs require a professional license to purchase.

INCREASED WEB PRESENCE

In an effort to provide services to people outside of our office hours we are continuing to look at ways to reach people online with reliable, well-researched resources. This year for the first time, HOJO began using Skype live-chat services to assist former exchange students who are no longer in Canada but wanted to understand how to deal with housing difficulties they were facing from their time in Montreal. HOJO uses both Facebook and Twitter to inform people about on current housing and employment issues. There is more information on our Social Media use in the Outreach section. We have also noted that students are increasingly relying on online interactions to obtain housing and jobs. HOJO warns students to be wary of fraud – an online occurrence that happens all too frequently.

Campaigns

ACCOMPANIMENT

This past year HOJO continued accompanying students to other on and off-campus resources. The motivation for this is based on the severity of the situation, and different barriers the student may face including language, cultural, intimidation, and general vulnerability. Some accompaniments that we have made over the last year are to the Régie du logement, the police department, Concordia Security and to legal clinics. While we do not have any official role on these visits, providing support for these students is imperative.

PROTECT YOUR PRIVATE INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

This campaign works to sensitize students to the importance of not giving away their private information in order to complete rental applications. Many companies have very intrusive application forms and insist that private identification documents must be photocopied in order to process rental requests. Losing track of SIN card number, and birth certificate or passport numbers can lead to problems for students including fraud. The privacy campaign encourages students not to give out this information and also discusses what to do after the fact. We try to highlight the importance of privacy rights and how they apply to students.

RENTAL INCREASE AND LEASE RENEWAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

This ongoing campaign works to raise awareness amongst students that annual rent increase requests can be refused and that you can't be evicted for refusing a request. It is a common myth amongst students that you can't do anything if you receive a letter telling you that your rent is increasing and this is not the case. HOJO explains the refusal of rent increase process to students and hands out related documents. We disseminate the yearly averages that the RDL comes out with so that students can have an estimation of how much of an increase is reasonable. Furthermore many students are unaware of how to legally provide notice of non-renewal of the lease, and end up having to be responsible for the lease for an additional term. We try and circulate this information as well as provide documents of non-renewal.

MINIMUM WAGE CAMPAIGN

In May 2013 the minimum wage for most workers increased from \$10.15 per hour to \$10.35. The wage of workers receiving tips for table service, whose minimum hourly wage was \$8.75 the year before, increased to \$8.90. If a student visits us and they are not getting paid the minimum wage, we encourage them to visit the Normes du travail with their pay stubs and a record of logged hours. This process will enable them to receive the retroactive amount that is missing from their pay, as well as an increase to their wage to the legal minimum.

RIGHT TO PRIVACY AND EMPLOYMENT

HOJO continues to work with allies on campus and off such as the CSU Advocacy Center, the Legal Information Clinic and the Center for Research-Action on Race Relations (CRARR) to combat different sorts of civil rights abuses students face. Students may face discrimination relating to ethnicity, country of origin, marital status and social status by including too much private information on their resumes, or by completing housing or job applications which demand private information. This new facet of our privacy campaign focuses on protecting students from discrimination by first informing students of their rights, and then encouraging them to protect their private information when applying for jobs.

CASE STUDIES: EMPLOYER PROBLEMS

Jordan found an ad on the Internet looking for temporary employment as a site cleaner for a construction firm. The employer would not give him a pay stub and paid him by personal check. After cleaning construction sites for two weeks Jordan's employer began asking him to perform other duties such as laying tile, painting, and operating heavy machinery. He was not paid a higher wage for these duties and further, his employer began docking his pay as a form of 'damage insurance' against possible accidents. When Jordan resisted these new measures his employer threatened to report him to the government for working without a contractor's permit. The HOJO informed Jordan of his rights and the responsibilities of his employers; as well as providing additional contacts to the Commission des Normes du Travail and other non-governmental workers' rights organizations to act on his behalf. The case is still ongoing as of the time of this report; however this illustrates how the HOJO enables students to navigate institutional bodies to advocate for themselves.

Jane worked at the same major chain restaurant and confections stand for three years. Her employer fired her without cause or notice after the summer season finished. She came into the HOJO because she was not sure when she was supposed to receive her final pay cheque. After asking her a series of questions the HOJO informed her of the various kinds of compensation she was entitled to receive because of the lack of notice given by her employer. At a follow up appointment Jane brought in her pay stubs from and the HOJO staff went over them finding numerous cases of overtime and work done on statutory holidays for which she was not compensated. After tallying the full amount, Jane found and the HOJO found that she was entitled to receive over one thousand dollars that her employer had failed to pay her including unpaid overtime, indemnity, and percentage increases for working on specific holidays. After helping her draft and review a legal demand letter Jane was able to receive the money that she was owed without involving the Commission des Normes du Travail. In this way the HOJO is able to support students that are taken advantage of by their employers to resolve issues in concrete and timely ways.

Resources

BASIC FACTS ABOUT RENTING IN QUEBEC

This is our most used resource that provides an overview to students of some of their rights and responsibilities as tenants. This document explains what the landlord can and cannot do, what information can be requested of an apartment hunter, the apartment sizes in Quebec, what tenants are required to do, time periods for giving lease non-renewal notice and other pertinent tips for student tenants.

MONTREAL APARTMENTS AVERAGE RENTAL PRICES

In 2011 HOJO started providing students with rental averages for central neighbourhoods in Montreal. This resource provides students with the monthly rental average of apartments by size and neighbourhood and is based on the annually updated data released by the Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation.

This is useful for students – especially those new to Montreal – in budgeting for their living expenses. This knowledge also helps minimize the chance of students being taken advantage of by unscrupulous landlords who illegally increase their rents. This resource also helps us collect data, which can point to certain disturbing trends, such as illegal increases.

CMHC RESOURCES

HOJO distributes a selection of the Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation's apartment comparison and inspection resources. These documents can help students who need to compare a number of apartments in a short period of time. We suggest students inspect apartments when visiting them to be sure they are well-maintained and don't have any hidden problems. As well upon moving in, we suggest students inspect the empty apartment and make the landlord aware of any problems with their dwelling as soon as possible so that repairs are done in a timely fashion.

LANDLORD/EMPLOYER COMPLAINT DATABASE

While HOJO has been collecting student complaints about landlords since the late 1990's, the use of a database called Predator in the summer of 2010 has facilitated the use of student complaints. Throughout 2013 student complaints continue to be added to this database. When a student comes in with particularly bad rental situation we ask them to file an anonymous complaint with us to prevent other students from having to deal with the same issues. The complaint includes information about the apartment and landlord, as well as the nature of the problems with the rental situation. When a student files an application a HOJO staff opens a file within the database and enters the information given by the student. If the landlord eventually tries to post an ad with us then we would send an e-mail explaining that a complaint had been made in the past and what it was regarding. The landlord would then be asked to send relevant documentation like the application form, the lease and any other pertinent document so that we could ensure their legitimacy and legality. This is to ensure that the ads that we post on our website are safe so that students don't get stuck with an unresponsive or unscrupulous landlord. Another manner in which Predator is useful is that when students find apartments through other services of just walking around, they can tell us the address of the building in question and we can let them know whether there has been a complaint against the building and if there has, the nature of that complaint. These two uses for Predator continue to strengthen our service when it comes to prevention of rental issues.

EDUCALOI SITE

HOJO employees continue to train in part on the Educaloi website. Educaloi is a nonprofit organization that distributes accessible legal information about housing, jobs and other topics to Quebecers in both French and English. This resource is used by employees to explain the legal foundation surrounding numerous housing issues and is often shown to students

Resources

who come in to our office seeking legal information. Not only does the website have a plethora of text resources, but they also have video via a Youtube channel. A video that has been useful to students visiting HOJO is the “Demand Letter” video which outlines one of the first steps in addressing most housing issues. This is useful for students – especially those new to Montreal – in budgeting for their living expenses. This knowledge also helps minimize the chance of students being taken advantage of by unscrupulous landlords who illegally increase their rents. This resource also helps us collect data, which can point to certain disturbing trends, such as illegal increases.

JOB SEARCH AND EMPLOYEES RIGHTS HANDOUTS

One of our most circulated documents is HOJO’s employment handout focuses on employment rights and resources as well as finding work. While many students are unaware about what minimum wage is, who pays for a uniform and whether or not they get a break over a five hour shift, this handout is an easy-access reference for them. The handout also includes a list of employment resources that may be of use such as the Normes du travail, CSST and Employment Insurance. This handout also has a job search guide that outlines different possibilities for students. The top section provides resources for on-campus work. For many international and out-of-province students this option is the most favorable. The section includes the link to the myconcordia portal where students can apply for the work-study permit, the financial aid and awards website as well as links to occasional or temporary work within specific departments of Concordia. We also encourage students who have the time and may be lacking work-experience to volunteer or do an internship, which they can find through our links our website or the LIVE Center.

Furthermore, for those students who need to improve their French the document refers students to Counseling and Development’s *Oui Can Help* services. We also include a list of other off-campus job banks, including employment initiatives such as *Emplois Centreville* and *Youth Employment Services Montreal*. If a student wants a full-time job or help with their CV or interview skills CAPS and JMSB’s CMS’ contact information is on the handout, as well as Counseling and Development for their resource library, and the Concordia Mentor Program for career guidance.

COMMISSION DES NORMES DU TRAVAIL

HOJO most often references for its visitors enquiring about work related issues materials produced by the Commission des normes du travail (CNT) where their mandate is to enforce employment rights. While we do not directly link students to the CNT, we frequently refer to their documentation and website. A particularly handy document is their booklet *Labor Standards in Quebec* which includes the employment standards and who is covered by them for the variety of industries students work in. The document also contains stipulations regarding the standards and provides examples, which are always useful where the law is concerned. *Labor Standards* also includes what recourses an employee or ex-employee has if their employment rights have not been respected. If a student comes in and they have a complaint against their employer, after consulting this document, we generally either refer them to the CNT or another service for non-unionized workers called *Au bas de l’échelle*.

Other documentation that HOJO have been using from CNT are the booklets for registering hours worked and the tip-sharing arrangement document. These two documents help students keep track of their hours and tips so they can ensure that they receive fair pay for fair work.

Resources

STUDENTS AND EMPLOYMENT

HOJO has compiled a fact sheet, available online about the contemporary circumstances of student workers. The fact sheet was developed by using Statistics Canada's data, as well as Sources et modes de financement des étudiants de premier cycle by the Fédération étudiant universitaire du Québec. Our intention is provide partial insight into the circumstances and experiences of workers in Quebec so that students new to the province can have an idea of what to expect when they enter the job force. Students and Employment outlines what kind of jobs students have access to during their studies, the average hours they work and how much they generally make. The document concludes with different resources to help students better tailor their job searches to their personal skills and interests.

CASE STUDY: HOUSING PROBLEMS

After leaving one difficult living situation, Martin and Lisa (two out of province MA and PHD students) found a large apartment in a duplex that met their need for affordable housing near the metro in the southwest of Montreal. The landlord lived on the first floor of their building. For the first year of their stay their landlord was amicable; even going out of their way to be friendly to them and they renewed their lease. Problems began to occur after police visited their apartment on an unrelated case in which Martin and Lisa were only asked to provide information. The police visited the landlord to assure them that the tenants were not accused of anything nor under any suspicion. Despite these assertions the landlord's behavior towards Martin and Lisa changed drastically.

Martin and Lisa began to have their water periodically cut off without notice or warning. They first came to HOJO when they received letters from their landlord accusing them of running an illegal enterprise from their apartment, of having large multi-person physical fights,

and of damaging the apartment. When Martin went to speak to the landlord regarding these allegations the landlord initially refused to speak to him, however at Martin's insistence the landlord opened the door.

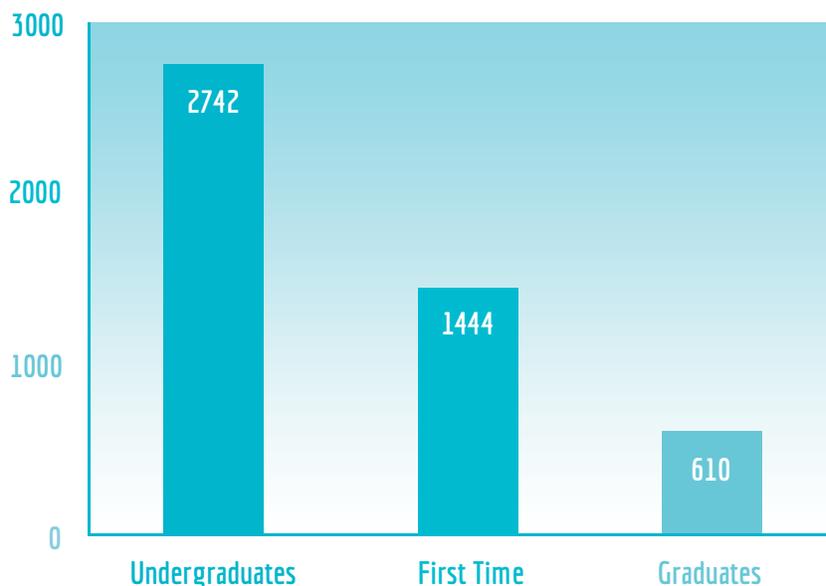
The landlord repeated the allegations stated in the letter and then became increasingly aggressive. Martin asked clarifying questions when suddenly the landlord struck him and knocked him off the porch of the dwelling. As time progressed their hydro continued to be cut off without notice or warning. When this would occur they would call the police to make a complaint, but by the time the police arrived their hydro would be reconnected and despite evidence of tampering the police continually refused to take action.

At the same time, their landlord made frequent complaints to the police alleging that incidents of domestic violence were occurring and that Martin and Lisa continued to operate an illegal enterprise from their apartment. This resulted in the police forcing their way into the apartment on several separate occasions to search for victims of violence or evidence of a crime taking place. Sometimes they would come early in the morning, other times in the middle of night severely disrupting Martin and Lisa's lives, their studies, and their sense of security in their home.

Martin and Lisa began to compile documentation to take action against their landlord at the Régie du Logement with support from the staff at the HOJO. HOJO Assistants provided them with information regarding the presentation of evidence at a hearing, with citations to relevant sections of the Civil Code of Quebec, and with information on making a potential criminal complaint against their landlord. This issue highlights the challenges tenants face when their issues touch on multiple areas of the law; while the issues regarding their lack of utilities clearly falls under the mandate of the Régie du Logement, the extreme delays in hearings times requires tenants to continue to suffer before having a chance to be heard. When such behaviors enters the realm of criminal harassment it then falls to the individual emergency responder to act however lacking a clear direction or order from their authorities they are just as powerless to act in a meaningful way.

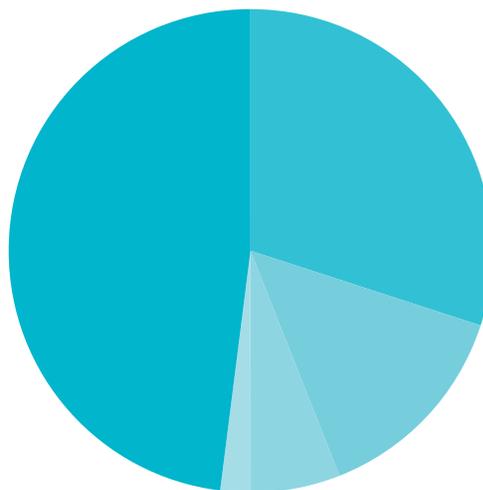
2013/14 in Numbers

VISITS TO THE HOJO OFFICE



TYPES OF INFORMATION REQUESTS

Housing Information 48%
 Employment Information 30%
 Legal Housing 14%
 Classifieds 6%
 Legal Employment 2%

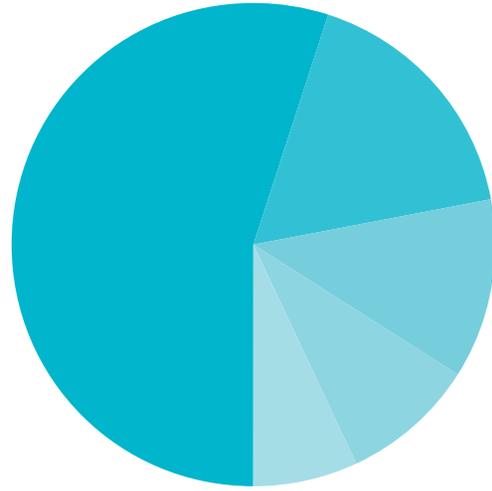


This chart details the main types of information requests our office receives. Housing information requests encompass nearly half of the issues we deal with ; these include orienting first time renters in Montreal to different neighborhoods and their average rents, informing tenants of their rights and responsibilities, and answering basic questions about leases, landlords, and the collection of personal information. This is compounded by more detailed legal questions which encompass 14% of our information requests; these include clarifying specific situations that students find themselves in, detailing proceedings at the Régie du Logement, and giving feedback on legal demand letters. Employment support is our next largest category of information requests that are general inquiries for help on job searches and orienting students towards on and off campus job opportunities. Legal questions related to jobs are some of our least active requests.

2013/14 in Numbers

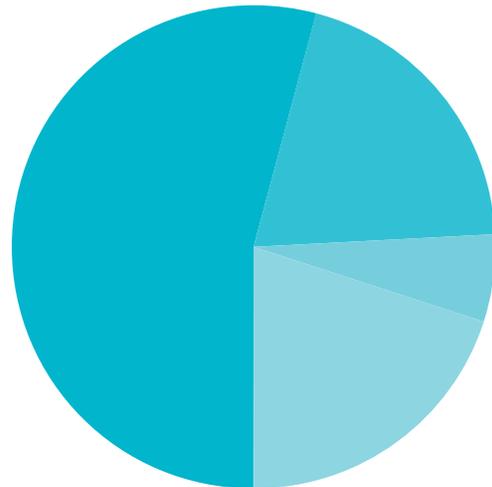
UNDERGRADUATE VISITS BY FACULTY

Arts and Science 55%
Engineering & Computer Science 17%
John Molson School of Business 12%
Fine Arts 9%
Independent Students 7%



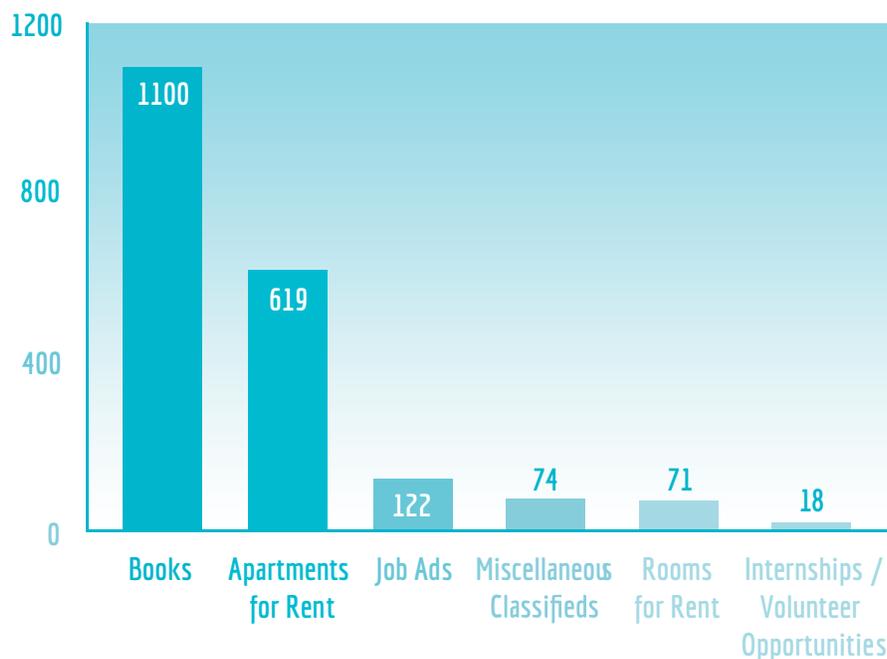
OTHER OFFICE VISITS

Graduate Students 65%
Other 24%
Alumni 7%
Continuing Education Students 4%



2013/14 in Numbers

AVERAGE NUMBER OF CLASSIFIED ADS ON OUR WEBSITE



VISITS, CALLS & EMAILS



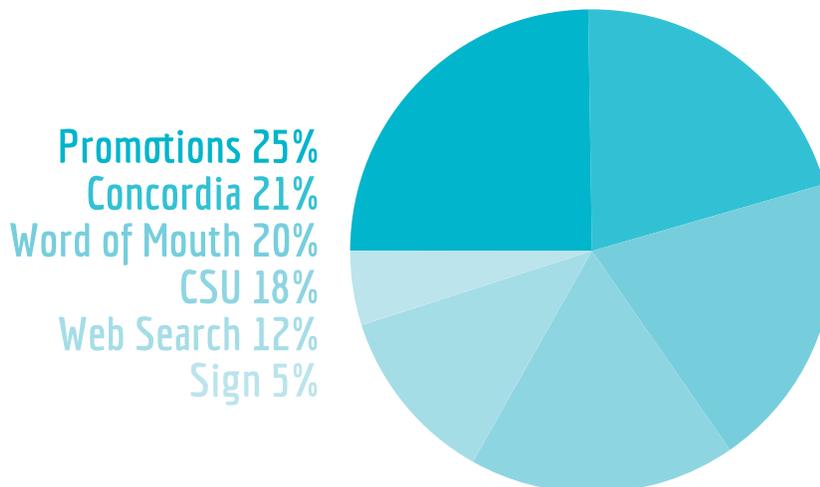
One defining feature of this year is that students were coming into HOJO earlier in the year than ever before. Whereas previously HOJO only began to see high volumes of students during the last week of August, our office experienced greater numbers than ever before throughout the entire month.

2013/14 in Numbers

ADS REVIEWED FOR THE CLASSIFIEDS SITE



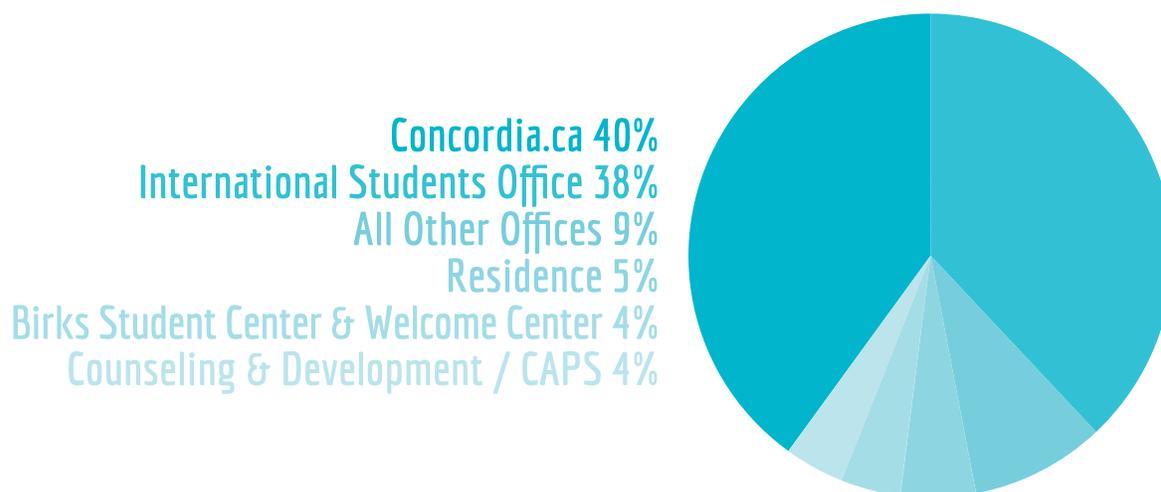
HOW DID FIRST-TIME VISITORS HEAR ABOUT OUR OFFICE?



This chart breakdown how students have heard of our services; the importance of these statistics is that they shape our outreach strategies to inform new students of the services we provide. Almost half of the new students were reached by our promotions or thorough word of mouth. This shows the importance of face to face connections including tabling, attending orientation events, and classroom announcements as outreach strategies. Our relationship with Concordia continues to expand our outreach capabilities accounting for nearly a fifth of our first time visitors which underlines the importance of having our services advertised in new student packages as well as on the university's website.

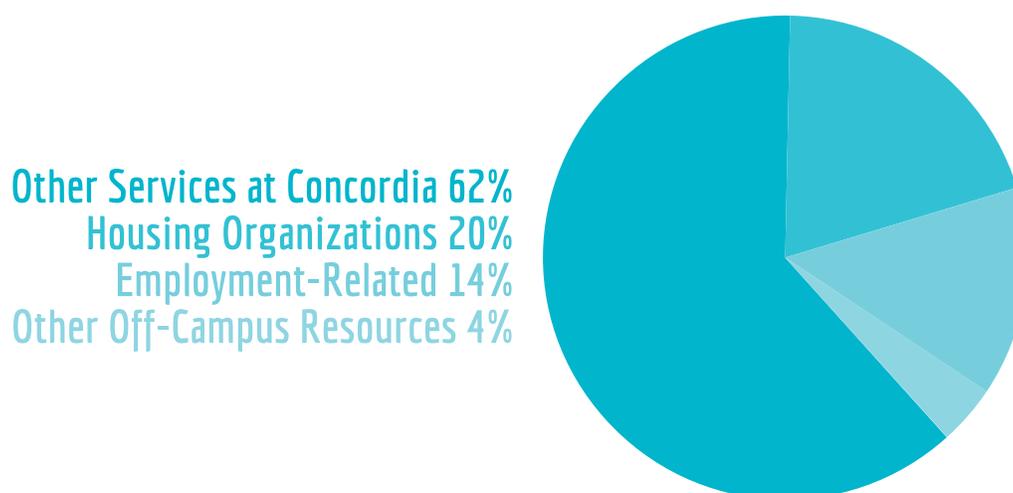
2013/14 in Numbers

WHERE WITHIN CONCORDIA DID FIRST-TIME VISITORS HEAR ABOUT HOJO?



From within Concordia the vast majority of students heard of our services through the International Students Office and from the university's website. These statistics influence our services in that we offer specific workshops for newly arrived international students through the ISO as well as developing additional resources targeted towards online users. The development of Internet resources serves as an important step for outreach as well as a medium to encourage students to come into our physical space where they can access the full breadth of our services.

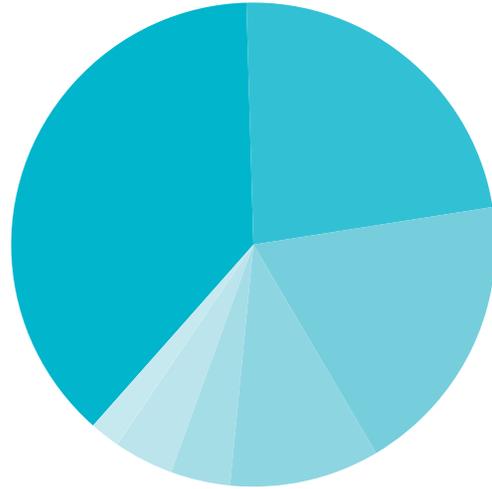
WHERE DID HOJO REFER STUDENTS?



2013/14 in Numbers & Workshops

WHERE WITHIN CONCORDIA DID HOJO REFER STUDENTS?

International Students Office 38%
 Counseling & Development 23%
 Concordia.ca 9%
 Birks Student Center / Student Tours 5%
 Financial Aid & Awards 4%
 Residence 4%
 CSU 2%



WORKSHOPS

We gave our Apartment Hunting Workshops preceding the start of both fall and winter semesters. Sessions in August/September were our most well attended workshops. Our workshop outlines some of the most common issues students face in searching for housing as well as their rental rights and responsibilities. We hold these workshops in a room attached to the International Students office. While working alongside the ISO for these workshops, we developed crucial links with the fantastic staff.

Our “Moving out of Residence” workshops took place in February/March at SGW’s Grey Nun’s residence. As the name states, these workshops were targeted to the students in residences who needed to move out by May 1st. This year, we continued to hold our workshop at dinnertime; a housing information session over pizza was a winning initiative in attracting more students. Scheduling was coordinated with the residence RA’s so as not to coincide with midterms or reading week. We continued to hold our mini-workshops, which last approximately 20-minute long and are focused on a specific topic. Examples include our “Heating Problems?” workshop as well as a “How to refuse your rental increase” workshop. There was also proactive question and answer periods for those who had case specific questions.

It is our primary goal was to provide information and to help students prevent problems before they happen. However, the workshops also served as a reminder that our services were available if and when students ever faced housing problems.

Promotions

In 2013 we continued our promotional partnership with the other CSU services by having our promotional material designed together. The ads continue to feature the principal services that HOJO, the LIC and Advocacy can provide to students. It has proved essential to our advertisements in student media, including CJLO, The Concordian and The Link. Ads were also featured in CSU documentation such as the annual student agenda and the clubs booklet. We also purchased advertising in CULT Montreal.

TABLING

In order to reach as many students as possible HOJO is committed to going to students to help them learn about our service and our website. Besides distributing our information via e-mail to our on-campus partners, we also distribute large quantities of our postcards to student service offices in order to be included in their mail outs.

SALON CARRIÈRES & NATIONAL CAREER FAIRS - PALAIS DES CONGRÈS

We attend the annual career fair to promote our site as a means for employers to find student workers as well as expanding the number of jobs that students have access too. This serves also to help employers understand the realities of student poverty and the difficulties of balancing a full course load and working enough to pay for school, rent, food, and many other unavoidable expenses. By doing so we hope to encourage better pay and practices from employers while also helping students find work relevant to their field of interest.

HOJO AND SOCIAL MEDIA

HOJO created a Facebook page in January 2011 to cement our online presence. We hope to continue to expand across multiple social media platforms to reach the maximum amount of students possible. We use these sites to stay connected to other community resources which could benefit our students, to find and share relevant news and job opportunities that are disseminated online, and to keep our followers updated on our events. Some examples of past social media "shares" are HOJO workshops, news articles relating to fraud, rental housing in Montreal, and Counseling and Development events. If you want to see more of what we do with our social media, like our Facebook page and follow us on Twitter!

Promotions

CSU Off-Campus Housing and Job Bank



Your reliable source for employment and housing information & assistance.



HOJO
Housing & Job Bank
hojo.csu.qc.ca

Are You Getting Paid Minimum Wage?



\$10.35/h
\$8.90/h (if you make tips)



HOJO
Housing & Job Bank

Just Say NO... To Your Rental Increase



Refuse your rent increase - it's your right



HOJO
Housing & Job Bank

I Have Bedbugs! Now What?



Yikes! Don't panic, We can help.



HOJO
Housing & Job Bank

Are You Freezing In Your Apartment?




You shouldn't have to wear a tuque and mittens inside!



HOJO
Housing & Job Bank

How Much Is Too Much?



How To Deal With Privacy When Looking For Housing



HOJO
Housing & Job Bank

Challenges

WAIT TIMES AT THE RÉGIE DU LOGEMENT: A TENANT AND STUDENT ISSUE

Bedbugs, one of the most common tenant issues we encounter at the Off Campus Housing and Job Bank, has an average wait time of 4-6 weeks. Considering the uncomfortable nature of pests, this can seem like a long wait time for a court order. Needless to say, this is not the worst-case scenario for some tenants: as an example, some tenants wait up to three years for a mold-related hearing. This is particularly troubling when contrasted with the Régie du Logement's recent decision to increase personnel dedicated to non-payment of rent hearings filed by landlords, in the name of "reducing wait times." As a general trend, this is unacceptable for tenants and their general access to housing security and justice. In the case of student tenants, immobility can pose an added issue as students often do not have the financial means or the time to deal with major housing issues while waiting for a hearing. In this sense, vulnerable populations should be able to rely on accessible housing information and justice, but simply cannot.

As the city of Montreal plans to increase the amount of international students it welcomes, the questions of quality housing stock and access to housing justice are becoming more pressing than ever for the student population. From our experience, international students are the most at-risk when it comes to housing conditions: they are often rushed and uninformed when looking for housing. If the Quebec housing tribunal does not improve accessibility, in terms of information access and reasonable wait times, it is clear that many students will come and go from the city with less-than-ideal housing experiences and no justice.

Hannah Brais,
HOJO Assistant (Currently writing bachelor's thesis on RDL wait times)

CHALLENGES

- Reaching a diverse student population requires many different communication methods in different languages
- Apartments that students can afford and more generally buildings downtown are often run by landlords with an overwhelming disregard for housing regulations
- Bedbugs are a serious issue for renters in Montreal. Many landlords continue to be unaware of or unwilling to follow proper procedure to solve the problem
- Wait times at the Régie du logement are on average more than 20 months which students facing apartment issues find discouraging as sometimes they will be finished with their degree before having their hearing date
- Lack of maintenance and oversight of rental buildings in Montreal leads to unsafe and unsanitary living conditions; students end up in these kinds of situations due to pricing constraints
- Unique difficulties for disabled students and student-parents finding housing that meets their needs
- Students learning English at Concordia face additional linguistic and cultural barriers in both understanding their rights and the recourses available to them when they face challenges
- Requests for excessive private information on job and housing applications are commonplace
- Landlords demand local guarantors from students who may be new to Canada and lack resident support networks
- High youth unemployment rate persists; Anglophones and International Students often have difficulties finding work while studying and in the summer

Priorities

PRIORITIES

- Developing a new user-friendly website
- Increasing our social media presence
- Continuing to build upon our outreach strategies to students before they arrive and when they are seeking rental housing and employment with a preventative focus on Housing and Employment Rights; further our relationship with university services to achieve these ends
- Adapting our service for Graduate Students as we now receive direct funding from these students as of Fall 2013
- Coordinating with the CSU regular office hours for HOJO at Loyola campus complete with increased campus-specific promotion of our services

LONG TERM PRIORITIES

- Increasing online resources for all students, while largely focussing on international and out-of-province students before they arrive
- Translating our resources into multiple languages with a current emphasis on Mandarin to better meet students' linguistic needs
- Building and maintaining stronger ties with on and off-campus groups with similar interests and values regarding housing and employment issues
- Sustaining plans to offer our services to students beyond our physical location
- Implementing a new intake and tracking system of student queries and concerns



A SPECIAL THANKS TO

CONCORDIA

Advocacy and Support Services
Birks Student Center
Career and Placement Services
Campus Tour guides
Career Management Services
CJLO

Concordia International
Concordia's Librarians
Counseling and Development,
including the Oui Can Help and New Student programs
Dean of Students Office
Enrolment & Student Services
Financial Aid and Awards Office
International Students Office & their great volunteers
The Welcome Centre
Multifaith Chaplaincy
Residence Life & the Residence Assistants
URBS 333 Urban Laboratory Class & Professor Ted Rutland

CONCORDIA STUDENT UNION

Legal Information Clinic
Our Hardworking Designers
IT Coordinator
Executive Assistant

AS WELL AS

Arnold Bennett Housing Clinic
Au Bas de l'Échelle
Commission des normes du travail
Legal Aid
Mile End Legal Clinic
Project Genesis
Ted Wright Housing Clinic
Ville de Montréal – Public Health Division
Youth Employment Services Montreal

