



Tech Fund Annual Report

MISC and MUSSA | 2019–2020 Academic Year

For more information about the Tech Fund:

misc.ischool.utoronto.ca/tech-fund

mussa-ischool.weebly.com/tech-fund.html

Email: techfund.ischool@utoronto.ca

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

In this document, we review the Tech Fund mandate and our efforts to fulfill it. When the 2019-2020 reps took office, we were provided almost no documentation and spent our first couple of months struggling to learn how to begin. This document will outline our challenges, as well as what we achieved throughout the past year. Our aim is to be transparent with what we do so that students can understand how the Tech Fund has driven value at the iSchool over the past year.

It has been an incredibly dynamic year, with the founding of a new BI program, the implementation *and* strike down of the Ontario Government's Student Choice Initiative (SCI), and the repurposing of the Inforum library into a services hub. All of these affect the Tech Fund and are covered in the 2019-2020 News section. Following that section, you will find our initiatives, followed by our financial statements.

1.2. What We Do

The Tech Fund committee is a student-centered initiative that focuses on supporting the information, communication, and technology needs of the Master of Information (MI), Master of Museum Studies (MMSt), and Bachelor of Information (BI) students at the iSchool.

The Tech Fund is responsible for allocating the committee's funds in support of the MI, MMSt, and BI populations. The committee meets monthly to review requests for funds submitted by current BI, MI and MMSt students in order to either approve or deny said requests. Decisions for approval/denial are made based on whether or not the request can be seen to be in line with the Tech Fund's mandate. Some examples of purchases that have been approved by the Tech Fund include new hardware for the Inforum, funding for iSkills workshops, and funding for independent MMSt thesis projects.

During the 2019-2020 academic year, students in the MI and MMSt programs contributed to the fund in accordance with the levy fee that was approved during the 2016/2017 referendum. Thus full-time equivalent (FTE) students contributed \$50.00 per annum, while part-time students contributed \$25 per annum.

1.3. Mandate

To directly enhance ICT (information, communication and technology) based learning, research, exhibiting, collecting and administrative services for Masters of Information (MI), Master of Museum Studies (MMSt), and Bachelors of Information (BI).

1.4. Tech Fund Representatives and Liaisons for 2019/2020

Nomination	Name	Position	Email
Second-Year MI Rep	Vipasha Shaikh	Treasurer	vipasha.shaikh@utoronto.ca
Second-Year MI Rep	Maya Pasternak	Chair, Co-Secretary	maya.pasternak@mail.utoronto.ca
First-Year MI Rep	Emily Waknine	Co-Secretary	emily.waknine@mail.utoronto.ca
Second-Year MMSt Rep	Savannah Sewell	Communications and Workshops/Events Coordinator	savannah.sewell@icloud.com
First-Year MMSt Rep	Vicky Jamieson	Referendum Coordinator	vicky.jamieson@mail.utoronto.ca
Departmental Liaisons			
	Curtis Debi	IT Advisor	curtis.debi@utoronto.ca
	Kathleen Schaeffer/Anna Oh*	Inforum Representative	kathleen.schaeffer@utoronto.ca/anna.oh@utoronto.ca
	Katherine Shyjak	Faculty of Information Business Officer	kathy.shyjak@utoronto.ca

*Kathleen Schaeffer left the Inforum in January 2020. Anna Oh joined in March of 2020.

2. News

2.1. Student Choice Initiative and Access

In 2019, the Government of Ontario's *Student Choice Initiative* (SCI) was mandated across Universities in the province of Ontario. It required universities to review all supplementary fees charged by the university, student governments and student societies and divide them into essential and non-essential fees; the Tech Fund was deemed non-essential, thus students could opt out of the fee in Sept. 2019.

We met with members of the MISC student council, the Dean, and Student Services representatives in an effort to understand what loss we might incur and how to respond. After much discussion, we ratified our by-laws to express that those who pay the fee receive access. We then granted a year of clemency to all students. Why? The resources required to put in a temporary system to deny and grant access outweighed the loss of capital of a small minority who opted out. You can see the numbers below.

Fee on ACORN Invoice	# of Opt-Outs	Total # of Students	Opt-Out Rate
MISC Tech Upgrade Fund-FT	63	639	9.9%
MISC Tech Upgrade Fund-PT	11	112	9.8%

Reported by Josh Hass <josh.hass@utoronto.ca>, Coordinator, Student Policy Initiatives, Office of the Vice-Provost, Students.

Luckily, in the Fall of 2019, however, the SCI was challenged in court by the Canadian Federation of Students and the [courts struck down the measure!](#) To be clear, it is no longer in effect. All students will automatically be charged the Tech Fund fee from now on.

2.2. Launch of the BI

The Bachelor of Information (BI) program was launched with approximately 18 students enrolled. Its director is Matt Ratto <matt.ratto@utoronto.ca>. We have granted the BI students access to Tech Fund loans until they form a student government which would allow them to officially vote on paying the Tech Fund levee.

2.3. Inforum Transformation

This year, all of the books and special collections left the Inforum, along with our reference librarians. Into their offices moved Student Services staff, who now loan out Tech Fund equipment. The result is a complete shift in faculty liaisons and contacts.

3. Initiatives

3.1. Increased Visibility

- **Internally:** We changed the role of the “Workshops and Events Coordinator” to the “Communications and Workshops/Events Coordinator” position, to include communications as the responsibility of a representative, following the advice of a 2018-2019 rep.
- **Inforum:** We worked with Inforum staff to create a visual inventory of all equipment that includes technical specs and imagery.
 - The goal was to make this available in a physical binder at the Inforum info desk and online. The inventory is still being worked on by staff. The binder would include reps’ contact info, a description of the mandate, request forms, and the visual inventory.
 - Framed pictures of equipment behind Inforum info desk
 - Information about the technology loans on the Inforum / FI websites now include a description of the Tech Fund and a link to the request form.
 - Applying stickers onto each piece of equipment: “brought to you by the Tech Fund”
 - Poster advertising and use of LCD screens in Inforum for messaging
- **Student Councils:** Providing door prizes “brought to you by the Tech Fund” in student government affiliated events

3.2. Support for Museum Studies Independent Projects

In the “Finance Guidelines” of the Tech Fund by-laws, it states,

A percentage of the Student Tech Fund budget purchases, defined as the percentage of MMSt students of the total combined population of MI and MMSt students, rounded to the nearest whole number, will be allotted at a minimum to benefit the interests of collecting and exhibiting within Museum Studies.

In order to fulfill the 11.9% of the Tech Fund budget mandated to support “interests of collecting and exhibiting,” we proposed to allocate the funds directly to the MMSt class, “MSL4000 Exhibitions Projects” wherein students work on their independent and final exhibition projects. Projects are predominantly self-funded, alongside some faculty support, and there is a system in place where students present their budgets and are allocated faculty monies. We coordinated with faculty members Cara Krmpotich and Agnieszka Chalas to add the Tech Fund monies to this pool to be distributed directly to these students.

We finalized the agreement with Dean Wendy Duff. All students were notified of the source of their funding. Faculty funds would be used first, supplemented by Tech Fund money. Any surplus would be returned, if the case arose. The total amount the Tech Fund committed was **\$6664.00.**

3.3. Purchases for Technology Loans (Inforum)

Description	Quantity
Dell Latitude Laptop (replacement)	1
Macbook Pro 2019 (replacement)	1
Technology equipment Bags (replacement)	4
Jamf Subscription fees (monthly)	Ongoing

3.4. Purchases for Technology in Support of Student Government and Student Groups

We purchased a lot of items for MISC, MUSSA and various student clubs at the iSchool. Here is a selection of the most notable items that were purchased.

Description	Project/Reason for Purchase	Council/Group
Microwaves, a kettle, extension cords, and other items	For revamping the iSchool Student lounge	MISC
Mini-projectors, external hard drive and bluetooth speakers	Bake Sale & Raffle to support Wet'suwet'en & Unist'ot'en	MISC
CART Live Captioning	World IA Day conference (accessibility)	World IA Day
Instax camera, Fitbit, mini-projector, wireless chargers, and other tech-related prices	MUSSA fall semi-formal, and MISC raffle (fall)	MISC and MUSSA
Square payment system	To process credit and debit card payments during events	MISC

3.5. Workshops

For the 2019-2020, the Tech Fund provided supplementary funding for the following iSkills workshops:

Description
3D Printing (x2)
Intro to Photoshop
Alternative Controllers
Computers without Screens

3.7. Tech Fund Events

For 2019-2020, we opted to provide support for MISC / MUSSA events (e.g. door prizes), and supported student-led events*, such as:

- World Information Architecture Day
- MISC Bake Sale & Raffle to support Wet'suwet'en & Unist'ot'en
- MISC Survey prizes
- MUSSA Holiday Party

**We voted to support other events as well, such as the Inclusive Design for Education Conference (iDEC), but events such as this were postponed amidst COVID-19 closures and funds were not distributed.*

4. Budget and Spending

4.1. The Tech Fund Account

From the 2018-2019 academic year, there was \$128197.59 that was carried forward into the Tech Fund account. The 2019-2020 Master of Information and Master of Museum Studies student body also paid a student tech fund levy fee via their tuition payments. Both of these sources of income were used to fund all equipment, iSkill workshops, and tech fund expenses.

Category	Income	Expenses
2018/19 Budget carry-forward	+12,8197.59	
2019/20 Student Tech Fund Levy Fees	+36,587.50	
Capital (Inforum Tech Loans)		-4460.64
MISC/MUSSA		-2223.41
MMst Funding		-6664.00
Student Project/Event Funding (~)*		-3241.2
Workshops		-3910.23
Miscellaneous*		-407.01
Food during Tech Fund Meetings		-137.65
Year End	\$142,708.91	-\$21,044.14

*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Curtis Debi was unable to forward all the receipts for various purchases to us (they were in his office). As a result, these amounts are estimated amounts, and not fully confirmed.

5. Referendum

The Tech Fund is required to hold a referendum every two years in order to ensure that the student population is still in favour of contributing to the committee. The last referendum was held in the 2016/2017 academic year, however because representatives in the 2018/2019 year did not hold a referendum, we organized this vote in 2019/2020.

We distributed a survey to gauge student satisfaction. Among the feedback, we heard that students wished they were more aware of Tech Fund initiatives, including its capacity to fund events, and encouraged us to have a greater presence on social media.

Based on its results, we drafted a referendum statement to distribute to the student body for a vote:

BIRT the MISC/MUSSA Student Tech Fund fee be reduced from \$50.00/year (\$25.00/term) to \$40.00/year (\$20.00/term) for full-time MI and MMSt students.

BIFRT the MISC/MUSSA Student Tech Fund fee be reduced from \$25.00/year (\$12.50/term) to \$20.00/year (\$10.00/term) for part-time MI and MMSt students.

The reason we have offered the students a fee reduction is that

- a) Tech Fund fees are among the highest supplementary fees
- b) We observed a large carry-forward in the Tech Fund account which out-measured our own spending capacity.
- c) Based on spending trends of the last few years in the committee, this decision would still leave the committee in great surplus for the next foreseeable 7 years at least.

The total number of MI/MMSt students who participated in the referendum was 71. Out of the 71 participants, 85% voted "FOR" the reduced Student Tech Fund fee, while 15% voted "AGAINST" the reduced Student Tech Fund fee. A majority of votes cast was needed for the referendum to pass, so the results are valid.

To proceed with the fee change, both MISC and MUSSA councils needed to accept the results of the referendum. Both councils voted to accept the referendum results. Therefore, the result of the 2019/2020 Tech Fund referendum is:

The MISC/MUSSA Student Tech Fund fee is reduced to \$40.00/year for full-time MI and MMSt students, and \$20.00/year for part-time MI and MMSt students.

6. Conclusion

In short, this was a big year for the Tech Fund in many years. After being in the dark in terms of processes and procedures, we were finally able to create norms and structures that allow for the continuation of the Tech Fund and the work it does for the iSchool student study. We support important student projects and initiatives such as:

- Various MISC and MUSSA events
- Museum Studies' students and their independent exhibition projects
- Student conferences like the World IA Day

As a committee, we are proud of what we were able to achieve given our obstacles and we hope that future committees can continue to build on our momentum.

To close off, we would like to say thank you to the Inforum staff, MISC and MUSSA, our faculty representatives, and the students who engaged with us (e.g. by requesting funds, or filling out a survey).