



McMaster University Academic Librarians' Association

c/o MUFA (McMaster University Faculty Association)

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Ana Serrano, President & Vice-Chancellor, OCADU
Office of the President, OCAD University
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President Serrano,

We were dismayed to receive news of an aggressive “restructuring” of the OCAD University Library which has resulted in the elimination of six permanent positions and the termination of four highly experienced and well-regarded librarians. We understand there is an intention to replace these six positions with three “new” librarian roles—one of which is an apparently administrative Associate University Librarian role—and one library assistant position. We struggle to understand why OCADU seeks to trade 67 years of experience and seniority, shared by four librarians who are respected by their provincial, national, and international colleagues, for comparatively trivial cost savings and a perpetual diminution of the Library’s standing and ability to serve its community.

We also understand that Jill Patrick, the University Librarian Emerita, was not consulted about this “restructuring”—in spite of an apparent assurance from Caroline Langill to “seek [Jill’s] counsel...as relevant issues come up.” It is difficult to imagine an issue more relevant than a total restructuring of the library, carried out in haste and apparent secrecy, immediately after the replacement of a previous University Librarian who served there for over thirty years.

Much could be said of the poor optics and apparent cruelty with which OCADU has pursued this process. Much could be said about the obvious humiliation and reputational harm to which OCADU has subjected itself as a result. Much could be said about the deleterious impact this process will have on OCADU’s ability to attract and retain talent in recruitment. We are certain that many of our sister Associations—and many members of your own community—are ably communicating these points to you.

Instead, we will speak from personal collective experience of the impacts a “restructuring” can have on a Library and its community — as you may know, our Union was formed under a not-dissimilar set of circumstances which resulted in a tremendous loss of capacity and capability for our Library and University. The debacle at McMaster in 2011 is a matter of record, but we would draw attention in particular to the catastrophic impact this process had on morale, trust, effectiveness, and the fundamental internal and external perception of the administration of the time. These effects are still being felt. For many members of our community, this became the foundational experience of their professional lives.

Bluntly, and in sum: decisions like this haunt communities and poison relationships for decades. We urge, in the strongest possible terms, a re-consideration of OCADU’s process, decisions, and leadership as reflected in the current “restructuring” plan.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Myron Groover", written in a cursive style.

Myron Groover

Past President, McMaster University Academic Librarians' Association, on behalf of MUALA Executive

Cc: Caroline Langill; Jamie Watt; Tony White