

McMASTER UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS'  
ASSOCIATION SUBMISSION TO THE McMASTER  
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY REVIEW TEAM

MARCH 26, 2012

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

McMaster University Academic Librarians' Association (MUALA) has reluctantly decided to participate in the University Library Review convened by the President and Provost. Our reluctance is rooted in the fact that none of MUALA's recommendations for Review Team appointees were accepted, nor were our concerns over the selection of the Team memberships adequately addressed. With all due respect to the Review Team Members, five of the seven reviewers have close affiliations with the University Librarian. As such, it is possible that these members could be perceived as favouring positions put forward by the University Librarian at the expense of other points of view.

Despite these reservations, we have decided that we must make a submission to the Review. Realizing that the Library's achievements of recent years will be provided to the Review from other sources, our submission will focus on our concerns about the way in which the Library has been managed over the past six years. While we realize that the Review is of the Library and not the University Librarian, we also recognize that the University Librarian has gone to great lengths to fashion the Library in his own image. In fact, in many ways, the Library has become synonymous with the University Librarian. Therefore, many of our concerns focus on the University Librarian.

Here is a summary of our concerns, which are detailed in our full report:

- 1. Relations with librarians:** Relations between librarians and the University Librarian have deteriorated to the point whereby the librarians have a longstanding non-confidence motion in the University Librarian, and have taken the drastic step of leaving the faculty association in order to unionize. We contend that the University Library suffers from a culture of fear and intimidation, poor communication between management and staff, inequity in treatment of employees and staff groups, and extremely low morale.
- 2. Staffing - Role of librarians:** Not only have eight librarian positions been lost, but also the roles of librarians within the University Library have changed, including a diminishment of management responsibilities. For several years now, librarians have no longer been encouraged or supported to pursue professional development opportunities related to management or leadership, such as the ARL's *Leadership and Management Skills Institutes* or the *Northern Exposure to Leadership* program. The egregious dismissal of the Scholarly Communication Librarian in 2009, one week before she was to begin a board-approved twelve-month research leave, has effectively discouraged librarians from applying for the research leaves to which

they are entitled, and has widened the schism between the librarians and the Library administration.

3. **Staffing - Postdoctoral fellows:** In the area of staffing, MUALA is not opposed to working alongside postdoctoral fellows. In fact, possible collaborations and sharing of experiences strengthen the Library, and the university. However, in the midst of repeated restructuring of the Library and the recent cuts to librarian numbers through a drastic reduction in the salary budget, postdoctoral position and posting descriptions recognize the value of librarian work, but not of librarians. As a result, it is difficult to countenance the seeming replacement of librarians with postdoctoral fellows.
4. **Collections:** In the area of Collections, the dissolution of the Library's liaison program has meant that systematic two-way communication between the Library and academic departments has largely fallen by the wayside. The loss of broad expertise and outreach, particularly in the sciences and engineering, threatens to make Library services increasingly marginal to faculty in these departments.
5. **Archives and Research Collections:** In Archives and Research Collections the Library has—on two occasions since 2010—entered into agreements that may bring embarrassment to the University. In both cases, the situation may have been avoided if the Librarians with expertise in the respective areas had been adequately consulted. It would be nice to say that these occurrences were isolated incidents, but the University Librarian frequently acts in a cavalier manner with little or no regard for the long-term consequences of the actions taken.
6. **Information literacy instruction:** Regarding information literacy instruction, the lack of staff and resources means the University Library can offer little in terms of programmatic support to students. Despite the success of the liaison program, the University Librarian disbanded it in 2011 “due to budgetary realities”.<sup>1</sup> The liaison model continues to exist for the Faculty of Business and the Integrated Science Program, with the resulting uneven support for students and faculty across campus, and a lack of subject expertise among the librarians. These developments deviate from the collaborative, curriculum-integrated model identified as a best practice for information literacy instruction established by ACRL and will almost certainly have a negative impact on the information literacy skills of McMaster students.

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<sup>1</sup> McMaster University Library. (2011, August 30). Changes to liaison / instruction in the University Library: A message from the University Librarian. Retrieved from <http://library.mcmaster.ca/news/8848>

7. **Public services:** In 2008, the Library announced the introduction of ‘blended service’, a new model of service delivery whereby research help, access services (circulation and ILL) and information technology assistance would be offered from a single service point by paraprofessional staff, removing librarians from front line service. The benefit of removing librarians from this role was never explained by Library administration, and the quality of service in the new model has never been measured. While the Library administration claims to espouse evidence-based decision making, the dissolution of the Liaison Program and the implementation of a blended services model belie this claim.
8. **Library as space:** The allocation of Library space, one of its most valuable assets, has been shortsighted at best and disruptive and detrimental to its service mission, at worst. The Library’s giving or trading away space has necessitated ongoing, costly later moves, particularly affecting collections and study space. Mills Library in particular is in a constant state of disarray, with books and furniture stacked in public areas, and seating areas hastily created in hallways and other high traffic areas.
9. **Budget:** In general, there is a lack of transparency regarding the Library budget. The budget is managed in a haphazard fashion, with periods of largesse and extravagance followed by draconian budget cuts, leaving us to question the University Librarian’s abilities to manage a budget and exercise fiscal restraint. A number of excuses have been made by Library administration for its numerous budget shortfalls, including the downturn in the stock market and fluctuations in the CDN/US exchange rate, even though the CDN/US dollar exchange rates have been close to par during the University Librarian’s tenure.<sup>2</sup> Given the opaque nature with which budget is treated in the Library, MUALA would welcome a forensic audit of the University Library.
10. **Assessment and Strategic Planning:** While the University Library has made some positive steps towards developing a more thoughtful approach to strategic planning and an evidence-based decision-making process, MUALA is deeply concerned that there is a disconnect between the strategic objectives described in the new Balanced Scorecard and the actual direction that the Library takes. For example, the re-purposing of library space, the library’s new catalogue, and the blended service model for the delivery of reference, circulation and ILL, have not been evaluated to gauge the success and/or impact of these decisions. There are concerns that when

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<sup>2</sup> Bank of Canada. (1995-2012). Monthly and annual average exchange rates. Retrieved from <http://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/exchange/exchange-rates-in-pdf/>

monitoring the University Library's progress towards meeting its goals, problems and concerns raised by staff are ignored and glossed over so that only a very positive report is given. As a result, staff are disillusioned by the strategic planning and scorecard process, believing it to be mainly a public relations exercise.

In recent weeks, we have learned that the University Librarian will be departing McMaster University at the end of the current academic year. We look forward to a fresh start with a new University Librarian. Our expectation in going forward is that the new administration will—as espoused in the University's mission statement—"value integrity, quality, inclusiveness and teamwork in everything we do."<sup>3</sup> Under the present University Librarian, we believe that these qualities have been neglected. We hope that we may soon participate in yet another, more positive, transformation of the Library that manages to incorporate these values even as we continue our commitment to "creativity, innovation and excellence" in serving the students, faculty and staff of McMaster University and the wider community. We look forward to an administration that genuinely supports open communication, transparency, collaboration and collegiality.

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<sup>3</sup> McMaster University. Office of Public Relations. (2012). Fast facts: Mission & vision. Inspiring innovation & discovery. Retrieved from [http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/html/opr/fast\\_facts/main/mission.html](http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/html/opr/fast_facts/main/mission.html)

## FULL REPORT

MUALA has reluctantly decided to participate in the University Library Review convened by the President and Provost. Our reluctance is rooted in the fact that none of MUALA's recommendations for Review Team appointees were accepted, nor were our concerns over the selection of the Team memberships adequately addressed. With all due respect to the Review Team Members, five of the seven reviewers have close affiliations with the University Librarian. As such, it is possible that these members could be perceived as favouring positions put forward by the University Librarian at the expense of other points of view.

Despite these reservations, we have decided that we must make a submission to the Review. Realizing that the Library's achievements of recent years will be provided to the Review from other sources, our submission will focus on our concerns about the way in which the Library has been managed over the past six years. While we realize that the Review is of the Library and not the University Librarian, we also recognize that the University Librarian has gone to great lengths to fashion the Library in his own image. In fact, in many ways, the Library has become synonymous with the University Librarian. Therefore, many of our concerns focus on the University Librarian.

## RELATIONS WITH LIBRARIANS

Over the course of the University Librarian's tenure, relations between Library administration and librarians have effectively come to a halt. This relationship, poorly managed by Library and university administration, led to not only a unanimous vote of no confidence in the University Librarian, but to the librarians taking the drastic measure of separating from the faculty association and forming a union in response to what was happening mainly in the University Library, and was an action of last resort.

McMaster librarians have undertaken two studies that attempt to address the many issues in the work environment. A 2009 study, *Defining the Healthy Organization* (Appendix 2), was done as a part of the Balanced Scorecard initiative, "Nurture a Healthy, Dynamic and Collaborative Organization", which brought to light issues around common purpose, communication, inclusion, and job satisfaction. The second study, based on an ARL library survey for reviewing library directors, *MUALA Review of McMaster University Librarian Five-Year Term 2006-2011* (Appendix 1), addressed four areas: leadership, communication, administration, and effectiveness.

Both studies demonstrate that McMaster University Library suffers from a culture of fear and intimidation, poor communication between management and staff, inequity in treatment of employees and staff groups, and extremely low morale. Further, the reports

indicate that the University Library is managed like a “one-man show” where poor decisions are made due to lack of consultation with staff.

## STAFFING

MUALA would like to reiterate its statement below on the recent increase in postdoctoral fellows in the McMaster Library:

In the midst of repeated restructuring the Library and the recent cuts to librarian numbers through a drastic reduction in the salary budget, such position and posting descriptions recognize the value of librarian work, but not of librarians. As a result, it is difficult to countenance the seeming replacement of librarians with postdoctoral fellows.

Given MUALA’s responsibility of promoting the welfare of academic librarians employed at the university, MUALA views this as yet another symptom of the erosion of the role of academic librarians on campus, and condemns these actions by the University Library administration.

Furthermore, MUALA is not opposed to working alongside postdoctoral fellows. In fact, possible collaborations and sharing of experiences strengthen the Library, and the university. However, systematically replacing librarians with postdoctoral fellows is detrimental not only to the Library, and the university, but also the entirety of the academic community.

While the number of postdoctoral fellows in the University Library continues to increase, librarian employment in the University Library could be likened to a revolving door. Positions are created and then filled temporarily (e.g., Digital Experience Librarian, Immersive Learning Librarian, GIS Librarian), declared redundant (e.g., Strategic Initiatives Librarian, Scholarly Communication Librarian), or sometimes not filled at all (e.g., Business Fluencies Librarian, Media Fluencies Librarian). Librarians who resign or take leaves are not replaced, leaving service needs unmet and resulting in a loss of knowledge and expertise.



The following is a summary of changes to librarian staffing since 2006:

**Hires:**

8 librarians

**Reductions:**

Voluntary separation packages – 8 librarians

Redundancies – 2 librarians

Resignations – 6 librarians

*Total Reductions – 16 librarians*

= NET loss of 8 librarian positions

The impact of the loss of librarians at the University Library has also had an impact on services provided in the Health Sciences Library. Librarians in the Health Sciences Library now find it difficult to refer students to librarians in the University Library since these latter no longer have designated subject or liaison areas. There has been a loss of expertise for specialized support & searching, e.g., patent searching, help with maps. Finally, joint programs such as Medical Radiation Science are no longer equally supported by the University Library.

Not only have librarian positions been lost, but also the roles of librarians within the University Library have changed: only two positions remain that involve the supervision of Library staff, and one additional position exists that includes the supervision of students. The result is that management as a means for career advancement no longer exists for librarians. The heads of services positions in Mills, Thode and Innis libraries, formerly occupied by librarians, are now held by members of The Management Group (TMG), none of whom holds an MLIS and some of whom don't hold a library technician's diploma. The position of Director of Maps, GIS and Data, formerly a librarian position, is now held on an interim basis by a postdoctoral fellow with no managerial experience and no experience working in libraries.

For several years now, librarians have not been encouraged or supported to pursue professional development opportunities related to management or leadership, such as the ARL's *Leadership and Management Skills Institutes* or the *Northern Exposure to Leadership* program. The dismissal of the Scholarly Communication Librarian in 2009, one week before she was to begin a board-approved twelve-month research leave, was decried by the McMaster University Faculty Association Executive in a letter to McMaster's President,

Provost and Chair of the Board, declaring the “nature of the termination to be outrageous and the decision itself ill considered”.<sup>4</sup> This egregious action has effectively discouraged librarians from applying for the research leaves to which they are entitled, and has amplified the schism between librarians and the Library administration.

## COLLECTIONS

The University Library collection supports research and teaching in the Humanities, Social Sciences, Business, Sciences, and Engineering. Forty-two academic departments and programs designate a faculty member to serve as liaison to the Library. Until 2011, and the dissolution of the Library’s liaison program, each department was also matched with a librarian who worked with the department to deliver instruction, guide collection decisions, communicate Library initiatives, and hear faculty concerns. Although we maintain good relations with individual faculty members, systematic two-way communication has largely fallen by the wayside. McMaster University Library librarians are no longer closely tied to the departments, and have lost the staff who would inform the Library of changes in curriculum and research interests.

In the spring of 2010, the professional complement within Collections was reduced from three librarians (the AUL Collections, Collections Services Librarian, and E-Resources Librarian) to one and a half, with the AUL Collections taking on significant responsibilities in Archives and Research Collections, and responsibilities for purchased collections consolidated onto a single librarian. Librarians in the Business school continue to actively manage online and physical collections for that faculty, but this is now the exception. The loss of broad expertise and outreach, particularly in the sciences and engineering, threatens to make Library services increasingly marginal to faculty in these departments.

Monographs are selected by the faculty liaisons from emailed lists of new publications. Until 2011, librarian liaisons assisted with selection when the faculty neglected this task, to ensure that all subjects were at least minimally covered. Short-term e-book loans provide some current content for missing areas.

## ARCHIVES AND RESEARCH COLLECTIONS

The recent *Organizational Review* of the Library’s Division of Archives and Research Collections by Dr. Ken Cruikshank (Professor, Department of History) and Vivian Lewis (AUL, Organizational Development) raised many issues supported by MUALA, including concerns about staffing levels and storage space. Of perhaps even greater concern to the

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<sup>4</sup> McMaster University Faculty Association (MUFA). (2009). Librarian dismissals. Retrieved from <http://www.mcmaster.ca/mufa/LibrarianDismissal2009.pdf>

Librarians is the fact that the Library, on two occasions since 2010, has entered into agreements that may bring embarrassment to the University. In both cases, the situation may have been avoided if the librarians with expertise in the respective areas had been adequately consulted.

For confidentiality reasons, the details of the two cases cannot be provided here, but in one instance, the Library (or the University, acting on advice from the Library) accepted a collection as a donation on terms that contradict accepted professional standards. In the second instance, the Library engaged with an outsourcing company that has resulted in what we would describe as an inferior digital product, a product that is being promoted by the Library. In the past, when consultations with librarians were the norm, it may have been possible to ensure that the donation agreement did not contain elements that contravene professional standards, and that the digitization project was undertaken with more attention to accepted practices.

It would be nice to say that these occurrences were isolated incidents, but the University Library—and in particular, the University Librarian—frequently acts in a cavalier manner with little or no regard for the long-term consequences of the actions taken. It is hoped that consultations with librarians will resume in the immediate future to help prevent such potentially embarrassing situations from occurring again.

#### INFORMATION LITERACY INSTRUCTION

According to its mission statement, “the University Library advances teaching, learning and research at McMaster by: teaching students to be successful, ethical information seekers...”<sup>5</sup> In fact however, the lack of staff and resources means the University Library can offer little in terms of programmatic support to students.

In 2007, the Library instituted a Library Liaison program that paired librarians with departments, programs and campus and community partners.<sup>6</sup> In our opinion, the Liaison program was highly successful, resulting in a strengthening of partnerships between librarians and faculty, as evidenced by a significant increase in information literacy instruction classes (399 classes in 2008/09; 389 classes in 2009/10; 481 classes in 2010/11) and one-on-one consultations between librarians and students (100 consultations in 2008/09; 146 consultations in 2009/10; 509 consultations in 2009/10). Despite these successes, the Liaison program was disbanded in 2011. According to

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<sup>5</sup> McMaster University Library. (c.2011). Mission, planning documents and reports. Retrieved from <http://library.mcmaster.ca/mission>

<sup>6</sup> McMaster University Library. (2008). Liaison program pairs librarians with faculty. Retrieved from <http://library.mcmaster.ca/news/2940>

Trzeciak, “due to budgetary realities, we no longer have the staffing resources required to assign librarians to specific departments, thus making the Liaison Program unscalable and unsustainable over the long term.”<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that despite the University Librarian’s assertion that the program was being cut because it is “resource intensive” and “unscalable and unsustainable”, this model continues to be supported in a few specific areas: the faculty of Business benefits from the services of two full-time librarians, one serving the undergraduate population and the other providing support to MBA students, and the Science Fluencies Librarian is integrated into the Integrated Science (iSci) program, an elite program with a small enrolment of approximately 140 students. In contrast, the instruction needs of students and faculty in the Humanities and Social Sciences are met by only four librarians, each of whom who has another primary role in the Library, with instruction being but one of their position responsibilities. The Faculties of Engineering and Science, with an enrollment of 11,953 FTE in 2011-2012<sup>8</sup>, are served by one librarian, who devotes much of his time to the iSci program.

The result is uneven support for students and faculty across campus, and a lack of subject expertise among the librarians. Requests for instruction are met on a first-come first-served basis. This reactive model deviates from the collaborative, curriculum-integrated model identified as a best practice for information literacy instruction established by the Association of College and Research Libraries<sup>9</sup> and will almost certainly have a negative impact on the information literacy skills of McMaster students.

One solution to this problem was a hasty creation, over the summer of 2011, of a series of generic online modules that cover basic information literacy skills. These modules were originally envisioned by the Blended Learning Task Force (a team comprised of instruction librarians and Library staff) to be supported by a librarian in-class, in the true sense of blended learning.<sup>10</sup> In practice, however, the Library administration has made clear that

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<sup>7</sup> McMaster University Library. (2011, August 30). Changes to liaison / instruction in the University Library: A message from the University Librarian. Retrieved from <http://library.mcmaster.ca/news/8848>

<sup>8</sup> McMaster University. Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. (2012). University statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.mcmaster.ca/avpira/universitystatistics.html>

<sup>9</sup> Association of College and Research Libraries. Institute for Information Literacy. (2003, 2012). Characteristics of programs of information literacy that illustrate best practices: A guideline. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/characteristics>

<sup>10</sup> McMaster University Library. Blended Learning Task Force. (2011). Report and recommendations. Retrieved from <http://online.blog.lib.mcmaster.ca/files/2011/04/BLTF-Recommendations-April-9-2011-1.pdf>

these modules will not be supported with in-person information literacy instruction provided by a librarian.

#### PUBLIC SERVICES (REFERENCE, CIRCULATION AND INTERLIBRARY LOAN)

In the spring of 2008, the University Librarian announced that the McMaster University Library would introduce 'blended service', "a new model of service delivery whereby research help, access services and information technology assistance would be offered from a single service point. ...A blended service training team was established, and was responsible for:

- Developing a curriculum and training materials appropriate for new staff and for existing staff members moving into blended service desk positions
- Scheduling sessions and booking rooms
- Providing sessions in a timely, coordinated way
- Publicizing the schedule of sessions via a blog (see <http://blended.blog.lib.mcmaster.ca>)
- Seeking ongoing feedback from staff regarding usefulness of sessions and areas for more training.

All existing Access Services' staff members from the three university libraries were expected to participate in the training."<sup>11</sup>

The blended services initiative has been costly in terms of increases to staff pay grades and staff time needed to prepare and participate in the training program. The benefit of moving librarians out of front line service was never explained by Library administration, and the quality of service in the new model has never been measured. While the Library administration claims to espouse evidence-based decision making, the dissolution of the Liaison Program and the implementation of a blended services model belie this.

#### LIBRARY AS SPACE

The allocation of Library space, one of its most valuable assets, has been shortsighted at best and disruptive and detrimental to its service mission, at worst. The Library's giving or trading away space has necessitated ongoing, costly later moves, particularly affecting collections and study space. Mills Library in particular is in a constant state of disarray, with books and furniture stacked in public areas, and seating areas hastily created in hallways and other high traffic areas.

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<sup>11</sup> McMaster University Library Blended Services Training Team. (2009). McMaster University Library blended services training 2008-09. Report and recommendations. Retrieved from <http://blended.blog.lib.mcmaster.ca/files/2008/10/blended-services-training-report.pdf>

The University Library, or perhaps more accurately, the University Librarian, has strong ties with the Faculty of Humanities, as well some departments and programs on campus, including the Centre for Leadership in Learning (CLL), the School of Geography and Earth Sciences, and the iSci program. The result of many of these relationships has been the physical integration of the Lyons New Media Centre, formerly housed in the Faculty of Humanities, the CLL and the iSci program into the University Library. Each has been given large amounts of space—entire floors even—in the Library, at the expense of space for study and collections, and at the expense of the larger campus community. Recent additions to the first floor of Mills Library, The Sherman Centre for Digital Scholarship and the Bertrand Russell Centre, commandeer prime, visible real estate while restricting access to a limited few. We detail a few specific examples of these space allocations below.

#### ISCI IN THODE LIBRARY

In 2009, the bulk of the third floor of H.G. Thode Science and Engineering Library was given to a small program in the Faculty of Science, called iSci or Integrated Science. At capacity, this program will have an enrolment of 240 students; current enrolment stands at approximately 100 students.<sup>12</sup> In 2011-2012, with general student study space at a premium, and student council demanding the University provide more study space,<sup>13</sup> much of the print journal collection was moved from the second floor of the Thode Library into closed storage to make room for a floor of quiet study.

#### THE CENTRE FOR LEADERSHIP IN LEARNING IN MILLS LIBRARY

The fifth floor of Mills Memorial Library contains a large area that is separate from the general Library space. Until 2010-2011, this space housed much of the Library staff working in Mills. In a significant move, the entire area was emptied in 2011 in order for the space to be used by a unit distinct and separate from the University Library, the Centre for Leadership in Learning. Of the entire working area that once housed two Library departments, now only two librarians have offices. While we acknowledge that the physical integration of a teaching support services unit into the Library could result in stronger partnerships and the offering of joint programs of benefit to the campus, in reality, it has had little or no tangible impact on Library programs and services to date.

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<sup>12</sup> McMaster University. Faculty of Science. Integrated Science Program. (2012). Admission requirements. Retrieved from <http://www.science.mcmaster.ca/isci/prospective-students/admission-requirements>

<sup>13</sup> The Silhouette. (2011). Campus capacity: Bursting at the seams. Retrieved from <http://www.thesil.ca/?p=716>

Adjacent to the Lyons New Media Centre on the fourth floor of Mills Library is a large, well-lit conference room that is the home of the McMaster Health Forum's DialogueSpace. This room (used for 15 events in 2011)<sup>14</sup> is solely used by the Health Forum, and is not shared with the Library, leaving this space underused. It should be noted that the McMaster Health Forum has no affiliation with the University Library, and the rationale for devoting Library space to this organization, at the expense of Library use, has never been made explicit.

## BUDGET

In general, there is a lack of transparency regarding the Library budget. The budget is managed in a haphazard fashion, with periods of largesse and extravagance followed by draconian budget cuts, leaving us to question the University Librarian's abilities to manage a budget and to exercise fiscal restraint. As a case in point, in March 2009, the Library was a Cum Laude sponsor of the ACRL Virtual Conference, contributing between \$15,000-\$19,999 US, the only academic institution to contribute to the conference on the same level as large, for-profit vendors such as EBSCO, Elsevier, ProQuest and Thomson-Reuters.<sup>15</sup> During this same period however, a significant deficit was announced. A voluntary separation package was offered to librarians and managers, and one month later, two librarian positions were declared redundant. In an e-mail issued on Friday, April 24, 2009, to Library staff, announcing the firing of Donna Millard and Barb McDonald, the University Librarian stated: "At this time I feel no further staff reductions will need to be made, and that we can put this salary budget reduction initiative behind us."<sup>16</sup> However, since that announcement, staff reduction through voluntary separation packages and attrition has been consistently invoked as a strategy to attempt to manage the Library budget.

One justification offered by the Library administration for these numerous budget shortfalls has been the downturn in the stock market and fluctuations in the CDN/US exchange rate. In fact, CDN/US dollar exchange rates have been close to par during the University Librarian's tenure.<sup>17</sup> Travel or conference funding (for those who are able to

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<sup>14</sup> McMaster Health Forum. (2012). Events. Retrieved from <http://www.mcmasterhealthforum.org/index.php/about-us/our-work/events>

<sup>15</sup> Association of College and Research Libraries. (2009). ACRL footnotes - preview issue. Retrieved from [http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/customnews/acrl09\\_preview/index.php?startid=6](http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/customnews/acrl09_preview/index.php?startid=6)

<sup>16</sup> McMaster University Faculty Association (MUFA). (2009). Librarian dismissals. Retrieved from <http://www.mcmaster.ca/mufa/LibrarianDismissal2009.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Bank of Canada. (1995-2012). Monthly and annual average exchange rates. <http://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/exchange/exchange-rates-in-pdf/>

secure it) is not subject to any assessment of return on investment. MUALA does not understand why after a series of dismissals, involuntary separations and resignations there never seems to be a budget surplus, or at least none that is communicated to Library staff. Library staff can never be certain whether or not the budget is balanced, making the end of each fiscal year a period of considerable stress, and each new deficit announcement an unwelcome—but not unexpected—surprise. Given the opaque nature with which the budget is treated in the Library, MUALA would welcome a forensic audit of the University Library.

#### ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

The University Library has made some positive steps towards developing a more thoughtful approach to strategic planning and an evidence-based decision-making process. It has adopted the Balanced Scorecard approach to strategic planning and performance management, which we acknowledge is an improvement over past practice. MUALA is deeply concerned however, that there is a disconnect between the strategic objectives described in the Scorecard<sup>18</sup> and the actual direction that the Library takes. For example, one strategic objective states that the Library will “create world class teaching and learning spaces”. In recent years we have seen prime student study space re-purposed for external think tanks and elite programs (see *Library as Space* for examples). Another strategic initiative states that the Library will “improve discovery and access to scholarly resources” when in practice the Library’s new catalogue system lags behind many other universities’ in terms of ease-of-use, clarity, and functionality. A third strategic initiative states that the Library will “strive for exemplary service that is responsive to user needs”. The Library moved to a “blended service” model, removing professional librarians from the research help desks and replacing them with circulation staff that completed an in-house training program. It would be difficult to describe this as “exemplary” service. What is most disconcerting is that in all these cases, there has been no effort made to gauge the success and/or impact of these decisions.

In addition, there are concerns that when monitoring the University Library’s progress towards meeting its goals (i.e., monitoring progress of strategic initiatives), problems and concerns raised by staff are ignored and glossed over so that only a very positive report is given. As a result, staff have become disillusioned by the strategic planning and Scorecard process, believing it to be mainly a public relations exercise.

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<sup>18</sup> McMaster University Library. (2011). Library Scorecard: strategic objectives, measures & initiatives 2011/2012 (revised February 22, 2012). Retrieved from <http://library.mcmaster.ca/library-scorecard>



## CONCLUSION

In recent weeks, we have learned that the University Librarian will be departing McMaster University at the end of the current academic year. We look forward to a fresh start with a new University Librarian. Our expectation in going forward is that the new administration will—as espoused in the University’s mission statement—“value integrity, quality, inclusiveness and teamwork in everything we do.”<sup>19</sup> Under the present University Librarian, we believe that these qualities have been neglected. We hope that we may soon participate in yet another, more positive, transformation of the Library that manages to incorporate these values even as we continue our commitment to “creativity, innovation and excellence” in serving the students, faculty and staff of McMaster University and the wider community. We look forward to an administration that genuinely supports open communication, transparency, collaboration and collegiality.

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<sup>19</sup> McMaster University. Office of Public Relations. (2012). Fast facts: Mission & vision. Inspiring innovation & discovery. Retrieved from [http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/html/opr/fast\\_facts/main/mission.html](http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/html/opr/fast_facts/main/mission.html)

## APPENDIX 1

### MUALA REVIEW OF THE McMASTER UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN FIVE-YEAR TERM 2006-2011 - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, JANUARY 2011

The members of the McMaster University Academic Librarians' Association (MUALA) believe that the periodic review and evaluation of all librarians, including those in senior administrative positions, is essential to a healthy, dynamic and collaborative organization.

The review of academic library directors is accepted as common practice and the five-year review is seen as an important indicator of individual and organizational performance, according to the Association of Research Libraries (Soete, 1998).

MUALA calls on McMaster University to implement a regular, transparent and consultative review as part of the reappointment process for the University Librarian, and to invite contributions to this process from a broad range of stakeholders to ensure that the many facets of the job are fairly considered. Such a review can be expected to deliver benefits including: identifying areas of individual strength and possible improvement, opportunities for communication with Library partners about issues and concerns, and an improved sense of common vision for the University Library. MUALA recommends a regularly scheduled and standardized review process which includes input from all stakeholders who are affected by the performance of the University Librarian.

To model our commitment to such a process, MUALA has conducted a representative opinion survey of our membership, using a survey instrument based on "Library Faculty, Library Staff, and Director's Council Questionnaire for the Review of the Director of W[ashington] S[tate] U[niversity] Libraries", and published by the Association of Research Libraries (Soete, 1998). We recommend this survey instrument, or some similar standardized and widely accepted tool, be adopted as part of the regular evaluation of the University Librarian's performance as it offers a method for gathering consistent and comparable feedback. It reflects the interests of all stakeholders who are concerned with the University Library and is broad enough to reflect many areas of management and leadership.

The survey contains 52 questions that address five key aspects of University Librarian performance: vision, leadership, administration, communication and effectiveness. The survey results indicate that MUALA librarians believe the current University Librarian has considerable strength in the areas of fundraising and commercial partnership initiation. He is seen to be successful in representing the Library's interests to senior University

administration and committed to promoting McMaster University Library both on and off campus.

The University Librarian or the University Library received 1 to 3 ratings of *excellent* out of a possible 22 in the following areas:

#### LEADERSHIP

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- Leadership in recruiting excellent library personnel—1/22
- Leadership in fund raising—3/22

#### COMMUNICATION

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- Communication of the needs, concerns, interests, and accomplishments of McMaster University Library within McMaster—1/22
- Advocacy for McMaster University Library to the McMaster Administration—3/22

#### EFFECTIVENESS

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- Advances the goal of facilitating access to information resources—1/22
- Advances the goal of promoting the innovative adoption of emerging learning technologies—2/22
- Demonstrates the value of collaboration, innovation, creativity and risk taking—1/22

Despite these strengths however, the “overall performance” of the University Librarian received a rating of *poor* from 16 respondents, and *fair* from the remaining 6 respondents. In fact, the University Librarian received only 12 ratings of *excellent* out of a possible 1144—less than 1%—in the entire survey. The reason for this abysmal performance rating can be found in the survey results in the areas of leadership, administration and communication. It was in these areas that the respondents reached the greatest consensus.

The University Librarian or the University Library received at least 18 ratings of *poor* out of a possible 22 in the following areas:

#### LEADERSHIP

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- Integrity and effectiveness in dealing with people—22/22
- Inspiring a sense of common purpose and teamwork within McMaster University Library— 21/22
- Overall leadership of McMaster University Library—18/22

## ADMINISTRATION

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- Appropriateness of the University Librarian's allocation of resources—19/22
- Work environment within the University Library—20/22
- Confidence in and respect for Library personnel—20/22
- Ability to resolve personnel issues and/or disputes—19/22
- Objectivity and evaluation of staff performance—19/22
- Ability as an arbitrator, mediator and consensus builder—21/22

## COMMUNICATION

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- Openness with which the University Librarian conducts the affairs of the Library—20/22
- How well the University Librarian listens to and understands the concerns, suggestions and ideas of Library personnel—19/22
- How effective and clear the organizational routes for communications are within the University Library—18/22
- Direction and feedback the University Librarian provides to Library personnel—18/22
- University Librarian's encouragement of others to express their opinion even when it differs from the University Librarian's—19/22

Issues involving vision, communication, personnel practices and morale impair overall Library effectiveness.

MUALA calls on the University administration to consider the implications of the concerns expressed in this survey. Similar to the conclusions reached by the President's Advisory Committee on the DeGroote School of Business (PACDSB) (2010), the Library is also failing to build an inclusive community with a shared purpose as outlined in *Refining Directions* (McMaster University, 2003-2007). The deterioration in productivity, collegiality and reputation suffered by the School of Business is a cautionary tale. We hope that the Library can still avoid such a fate. The Library does not have the same history of internal antagonism or resistance to new endeavours as is described in the PACDSB report. MUALA is committed to the stated vision and mission of the University Library. We support McMaster University's *Statement on Building an Inclusive Community with a Shared Purpose* (n.d.) and believe that the University Librarian needs and deserves the same administrative support and resources as those identified for the Dean of Business.

The McMaster University Academic Librarians' Association is committed to working to develop and support a world-class Library worthy of our community of students and scholars. McMaster University's administration can lead this process by recognizing the

need for a balanced and collegial review of the University Librarian's strengths and needs. The benefits to the University community—in providing support and professional development directions for a key and responsible leadership position—will far outweigh the administrative efforts.

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## APPENDIX 2

### DEFINING THE HEALTHY ORGANIZATION

#### BALANCED SCORECARD INITIATIVE 9: “NURTURE A HEALTHY, DYNAMIC AND COLLABORATIVE ORGANIZATION”

The measurement of organizational health is most often accomplished by means of frequent and regular employee surveys, which serve to establish benchmarks and to facilitate early diagnosis and treatment in the same ways as regular medical checkups. It is important to have a standard or definition of “normal” health in order for regular checkups to be effective.

As part of this Balanced Scorecard initiative, all staff members were surveyed to gather input for the creation of a definition of “a healthy organization” specific to McMaster University Library. We were interested in obtaining a very specific and very local reflection of our organizational health issues, and in maximizing staff involvement in the process. The intended purpose of this definition is to direct the specifics of any future “pulse-taking” surveys which are developed or adopted to measure the health of McMaster University Library.

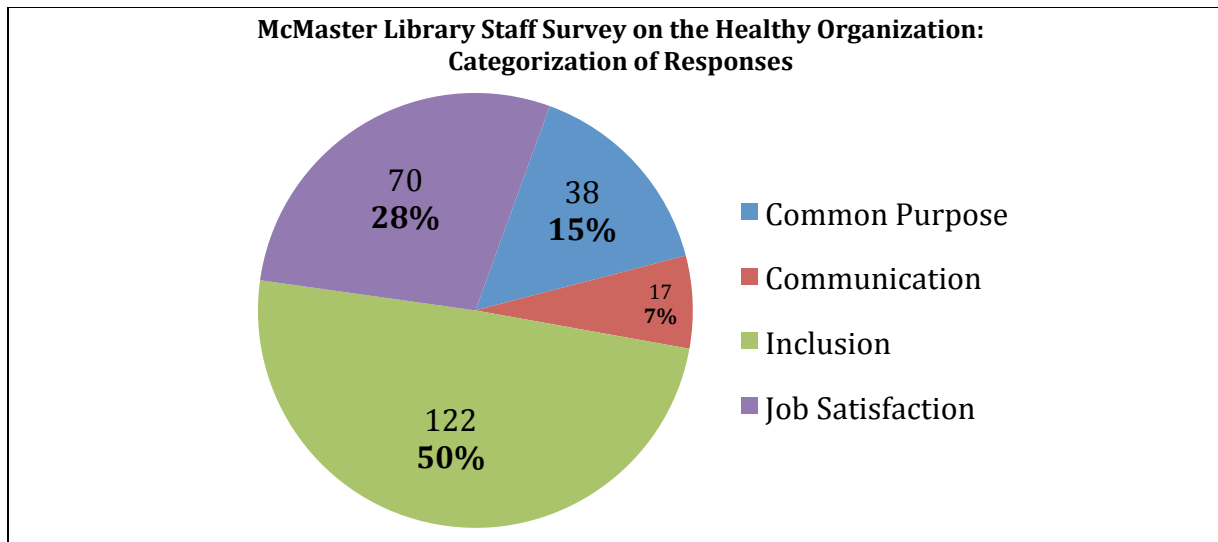
The survey was conducted using Survey Monkey, was opened on Friday June 26, 2009 for three weeks, and gathered responses from 44 of 109 staff members (40.4% response rate).

The survey consisted of three questions:

1. A “Healthy Organization” is a library where I...
2. A “Healthy Organization” is a library where everyone...
3. Do you have any suggestions or comments about measuring the health of our organization?

A small Healthy Org team (consisting of John Fink, Kim Kerr, Cathy Moulder, Karen Nicholson and Lorna Turcotte) reviewed the results and categorized them by issue. Categorization was often difficult because responses contained several related ideas. The 247 responses received for questions 1 and 2 have been classified into four broad categories:

1. Common Purpose
2. Communication
3. Inclusion
4. Job Satisfaction



**FIGURE 1: NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES IN EACH OF THE FOUR BROAD CATEGORIES (N=247).**

1. **Common Purpose** – which includes comments about services, customers, mission, management and leadership. *Responsibilities for the health of the organization in this category are shared by both employer and employee.*

- **Most frequently mentioned issues:**

- i. Shared common vision (e.g. “everyone shares common values and a common vision, and communicates this vision constantly at all levels”, “everyone is committed to the work to be done for the library and works hard together to accomplish goals/exemplifies the values of the library”, “everyone feels they know what the mission and values of the library and we are contributing to this”). Twenty-four responses (9.7% of the total) mentioned the importance of shared common goals, mission or vision.
- ii. Leadership (e.g. “everyone feels confident in their leadership”, “everyone can trust administrative decision making to be open, honest and fair”)
- iii. Customer service (e.g. “everyone is happy to serve the patrons”, “I serve our customers by giving them what they need and want with an emphasis on quality of service”)

2. **Communication** – *Responsibilities for the health of the organization in this category are shared by both employer and employee.*

- **Most frequently mentioned issues:**

- i. Emphasis on the importance of internal communication (eg. “everyone communicates at every level”, “everyone is entitled to reliable information about the organization and not rumours”, “information is shared so that low morale doesn't become the norm”)
  - ii. Emphasis on willingness to communicate (e.g. “everyone communicates freely, honestly and transparently; is open, receptive and willing to learn from others”, “everyone knows what's happening in the library \*before\* it shows up on YouTube”)
3. **Inclusion** – which includes comments about diversity, involvement, ability to contribute, decision-making, equality and equal opportunity, support provision, trust & respect (at the cultural level), provision of job security and academic freedom, management and leadership. *Responsibilities for the health of the organization in this category are mostly controlled by the employer.*

- **Most frequently mentioned issues:**

- i. Involvement (e.g. “I am treated as a vital part of the organization's mission and goals”, “I have input in the decisions which affect my work”, “everyone can contribute to decision-making”, “everyone can participate in making the organization a better place”). Thirty-three responses (13.4 % of the total) mentioned the desire to actively participate or to be involved in decision-making.
- ii. Respect at the cultural level (e.g. “everyone respects and trusts each other”, “everyone respects each other and is open to new ideas or different opinion”, “everyone feels that their work, regardless of their role, is valued and important to the entire organization”, “everyone believes that management values them and treats them fairly”). Respect at the cultural level means that the system as a whole expresses and values this expectation. Twenty-nine responses (11.7% of the total) specifically mentioned the word ‘respect’ as an important aspect of a healthy organization.
- iii. Opportunities for personal development and recognition (e.g. “I am supported in my efforts and offered time to development my skills”, “I feel my contributions are recognized and valued; that I feel I am part of the organization as well as my team”, “everyone has the opportunity to participate in varied activities and grow professionally”)



- iv. Equality and fairness (e.g. “everyone is treated fairly and given fair and equal opportunity in terms of committee work, etc.”, “everyone is treated fairly and equitably - based on proven abilities, competencies and talent, not alliances)
- v. Diversity (e.g. “everyone recognize the importance of having a ‘diverse’ staff and talents”, “everyone recognizes differences and promotes healthy non-judgmental discussion; doesn't tolerate gossip; support inclusivity”)
- vi. Work environment and support (e.g. “I am given the necessary support required to fulfill my job responsibilities (e.g., equipment, training, space, adequate staffing, etc.”, “I have the support of my supervisor and library administration in my professional growth”)

4. **Job Satisfaction** – which includes comments about compensation, working environment, training, colleagues and relationships, feelings of being valued and fairness, support for self-growth, trust & respect (at the individual perception level), perception of job security and academic freedom. *Responsibilities for the health of the organization in this category are controlled by either the employee or the employer.*

- **Most frequently mentioned issues:**

- i. Job security (e.g. “I am able to offer suggestions in an environment of mutual respect, free from the fear of reprisals”, “everyone can make suggestions without feeling they might be ‘put down’”, “everyone is not in fear losing their jobs if they speak their mind”, “I feel valued and secure in my position”). Forty-eight responses (19.4% of the total) mentioned that a healthy organization is one in which individuals feel secure and free to act and speak without intimidation or fear of censure or dismissal.
- ii. Personal satisfaction and fulfillment (e.g. “I am looking forward to coming to work and feel that my contributions make a difference”, “I enjoy coming to work because I am always learning new things and being allowed or encouraged to expand my horizons”, “I am truly engaged in my work”)
- iii. Personal accomplishment and recognition (e.g. “I feel respected for my expertise and my contributions, and feel that that respect is earned by merit not by favouritism”, “I am a valued and respected member of the team”, “I feel that my unique contributions and strengths are valued and appreciated”). Respect at the personal level addresses the feelings of the individual about self-worth and acceptance.

- iv. Working relationships (e.g. “I have good relationships with my peers, subordinates, and superiors”, “I have a sense of collegiality”, “I know I have knowledgeable and supportive colleagues to work with”).

Having examined these responses, in both word and spirit, the following common beliefs emerge which we believe define the healthy organization for McMaster University Library, according to our staff:

**McMaster University Library Definition of “A Healthy Organization”:**

All employees work together toward common goals, and are committed to excellence in services, collections and spaces.

Decisions are made as inclusively and transparently as possible, with involvement of all affected employees. Every individual has a sense of inclusion and engagement.

Communication is emphasized and is the responsibility of everyone. Communication should be regular, responsive and involve all levels of employees and administrators.

The work, opinions and expertise of individuals are valued and mutual respect is always expected. A sense of academic freedom encourages everyone to voice their opinions.

Trust and respect are important in every situation and must be nurtured at every level.

Diversity of individuals, skills and opinions is welcome and empowering.

Every employee has a pleasant, safe and positive work environment and opportunities for professional and personal development.

Every employee feels a personal sense of satisfaction from their contributions and a sense that their efforts are valued and appreciated by others.

Every employee enjoys a positive and secure team environment, which focuses on productivity and excellence.

**Recommendation 1:** Through the Balanced Scorecard initiative, McMaster University Library should implement an employee opinion survey, aimed specifically at the issues identified in this survey as being of greatest concern to Library staff.

**Recommendation 2:** This survey should be entrusted to an expert in organizational behaviour and employee opinion surveying. This ensures objectivity, anonymity and professional standards of information management. This individual could be a McMaster professor or grad student interested in developing a time-study of a local organization.

**Recommendation 3:** Based on the recommendations of this expert, the employee opinion survey should be conducted regularly and frequently, asking the same questions, in order to identify early symptoms of increasing satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

**Recommendation 4:** The survey should be promoted in a positive manner by all Library administrators and managers to counter-act survey fatigue and cynicism. Maximum staff participation should be encouraged to make it as broadly meaningful as possible.

**Recommendation 5:** Concrete actions must be developed to address all issues identified by means of the employee survey. Surveying without action is meaningless and will have immediate negative effects on employee motivation and organizational health. The Library administration and managers must guarantee and ensure action on issues of concern.

September 1, 2009

Healthy Org Team:

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