

May 13, 2011.

President Patrick Deane, McMaster University
Dr. Ilene J. Busch-Vishniac, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
McMaster University, Office of the President, Gilmour Hall, Room 238
McMaster University
1280 Main St. W., Hamilton, ON. L8S 4L8

Dear President Deane and Provost Busch-Vishniac,

On behalf of the academic librarians at the University of Toronto, the University of Toronto Faculty Association (UTFA) Librarians Committee is writing to express our deep concern over recent comments and actions made by one of your senior administrators.

On April 8, 2011, Mr. Jeff Trzeciak, University Librarian at McMaster University Library, at a Libraries Colloquia Committee by Penn State University Libraries presented a talk on "Transforming Traditional Organizations: McMaster University 2006-Present" where he said that in the future he would probably not be hiring librarians for McMaster University Library but IT specialists and Ph.D. graduates. In the near future, the conference "The Future of Academic Libraries" scheduled for May 17 does not include the participation of McMaster University's own academic librarians, a fact that has not gone unnoticed. In addition, the complete lack of gender balance in the panel has caused concern in the academic community at large.

The University of Toronto Library System is the largest academic library in Canada and in many subject areas, rank among the top five in North America. We have more than 160 academic librarians working in the sciences, humanities and social sciences, many of whom have doctoral degrees, law degrees, and other advanced degrees, in addition, to having accredited library degrees. It is the combination of degrees and expertise that ensure national and international standards in academic librarianship are achieved, respected and employed to fulfill our community needs. It enables professionals to make informed decisions for not just the short term but, more importantly, for the long-term benefits of the community.

Academic librarians recognize that trends and change are an integral part of academic libraries. However, they also know that while some changes are successful, many are not, leading to a waste of resources and valuable time. Short-term gains can result in long-term, irrevocable losses. It is from this perspective that we recognize the irreplaceable value of years of service and experience in our profession. It enables academic librarians to retain a balanced perspective; one that strives to retain what is at the core of an important academic library, while, on the other hand, embraces new ideas and technologies which promote and facilitate academic learning and research.

Academic librarians are members of a profession committed to intellectual freedom and the free flow of ideas and information. Those who work outside this network often lack the deeper ethical principles which guide academic librarianship.

Normally, such incongruous comments would not provoke much thought among serious professionals. Given the reputation that Jeff Trzeciak has gained in our community, however, we felt it was imperative to voice our concerns and demonstrate our support for not only the profession of academic librarianship but our colleagues working at the McMaster University Libraries who must endure the professional consequences of these remarks.

On behalf of the UTFA Librarians Committee
Respectfully,

H. Sonne de Torrens, MSt., MA, Ph.D., L.M.S.
Chair, UTFA Librarians Committee