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Report of the Chair of the Librarians Committee, 2019–2020

July 2, 2020

In mid-March 2020 the University of Toronto libraries across our three campuses closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Librarians and staff reverted to working from home. We were advised that no students could be hired for the summer and only eBooks could be ordered for collections. This is an exceptional time.

Looking back, it has been an exceptional year. Members of the Librarians Committee have participated in a number of important initiatives:

- UTFA recognized that there has been a systematic gender bias in the salary of librarians who identify as female at the University of Toronto. Community discussions began in the spring of 2019, after which an Association grievance was launched, led by Terezia Zoric, Vice-President, Salary, Benefits, Pensions and Workload. Effective December 1, 2019, all librarians who identify as women received a 3.9% increase to their base salary, retroactive to July 2, 2019.
- The University of Toronto's agreement to participate in Cubane Consulting's UniForum benchmarking exercise was met with resistance. Librarians, faculty, and UTFA were concerned about the introduction of a performance-based funding model stemming from such exercises—see OCUFA's analysis and the statement by CAUT on the harmful effects of performance metrics on academic freedom and on collegial governance, tenure and promotion decisions, and working conditions for faculty and librarians. UTFA launched an Association grievance with a mediated result giving librarians the right, as individual professionals, to refuse to participate. The University of Toronto had signed a five-year agreement; however, it has since "opted not to move forward with the Year 2 (2020) data collection." https://uniforum.utoronto.ca/
- On November 15, 2019, the Librarians Committee organized a one-day event at the Faculty Club, Charting Our Course: Empowering Librarians at the University of Toronto. This event updated new professionals and our community on the professional services and support offered by UTFA. Two keynote speakers, Tim Ribaric, Chair of the CAUT Librarians' and Archivists' Committee, and Professor Alison Hearn, Chair of the CAUT Academic Freedom Committee, joined us. Several panels were organized to review current issues facing academic librarianship in Ontario and across

Canada. Guests attended from Brock University, the University of Ottawa, Western University, and York University. UTFA's legal counsel, Helen Nowak, presented information on UTFA services, consultation, and the grievance process.
- Negotiations for the modernized Policies for Librarians continue. Kathleen Scheaffer, chief negotiator, is assisted by Emma Philips (Goldblatt Partners), Professor Ken MacDonald, Dan D'Agostino, and two members of the side table, Whitney Kemble, and Harriet Sonne de Torrens.
- Kent Weaver, retired librarian and member of UTFA Council served as Chair of this year's Nominating Committee. Retirees are members of UTFA and, unlike unionized faculty associations, UTFA negotiates on their behalf.
- UTFA secured for librarians, who are working at home with travel restrictions and closures, the right to carry research days that they were unable to use due to the pandemic over into 2020–2021.
- UTFA is supporting librarians and faculty to obtain the equipment and furnishings, like ergonomic chairs, that they need to prevent health issues while working at home.
- Deferrals of sabbaticals and research leaves for some librarians and faculty due to COVID-19 have been negotiated by individuals whose research plans and activities ceased due to the pandemic. If your plans for scholarship cannot be met due to the pandemic and you seek amendments to your plans, please consult with UTFA if you encounter difficulties.
- UTFA agreed to have annual activity reports delayed due to COVID-19.
- Librarians in the central system and at UTSC continue to encounter problems with the central database used to request and record research days. UTFA is checking into this ongoing issue.

We cannot foresee how the coming months will unfold or the special circumstances each of you may face, but we want nevertheless to reiterate that UTFA is available for consultation, advice, and assistance. It is often beneficial to talk through a problem or new developments. Reaching out to UTFA does not mean you are pursuing a grievance. It means you are getting expert advice concerning your rights, our policies, and working conditions, which are not always transparent. Please contact UTFA at advice@utfa.org. The more UTFA hears about individual situations, the better we can serve the community as a whole, especially during these unusual times.

Please feel free to contact your representatives on Council or members of the Librarians Committee**.** See here for policies that affect librarians and www.utfa.org for current news concerning the pandemic.

Harriet Sonne de Torrens
Chair, Librarians Committee

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