



Dear Colleagues,

At its meeting on April 30, 2009, the MUFA Executive reviewed the recent events put in motion by University Librarian, Jeff Trzeciak, which have affected MUFA librarians. They felt that all MUFA members should be aware of the current situation. Below please find two documents. The first is a statement issued by the MUFA Librarians which has been endorsed by the MUFA Executive and the second is a letter to the Chair of the Board of Governors, the President of the University and the Provost that John Berlinsky, Peter Sutherland and I signed.

Richard Stubbs
MUFA President

Statement of the MUFA Librarians regarding the firing of Donna Millard and Barbara McDonald, April 27, 2009 (endorsed by MUFA Executive Committee, April 30, 2009)

The MUFA Librarians vehemently protest the redundancies that have resulted in the firing of our esteemed colleagues, Donna Millard and Barbara McDonald. Until 2008, both Donna and Barb held positions as heads of operational areas in Mills Library — Donna in access services, Barb in liaison. The fact that they were both moved to new positions that last year were deemed "strategically important" but now have been declared redundant leaves us feeling suspicious and mistrustful.

We realize that the University Library is facing a budgetary problem, but we do not comprehend the rationale in firing these two particular librarians, who have made significant contributions to McMaster library, the university community and the library profession over many years. Why these two individuals? We do not believe that a satisfactory explanation has been offered. Given this situation, we express our lack of confidence in the University Librarian to make sound management decisions, and we request that Donna Millard and Barbara McDonald be re-instated to their positions.

In the all staff e-mail issued on Friday, April 24, announcing the firing of Donna and Barb, 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." We hope that this is true, but if additional budget cuts are required in the future, we request that they come only through attrition or through non-personnel means, and we request that MUFA librarians and library staff be permitted to provide input into cost-cutting plans. If we can contribute ideas on "revenue generation", then surely we can also contribute ideas on saving money.

At the end of his e-mail, the University Librarian states: "Thank you for your continued support." We hope that we have made it abundantly clear that at this moment, the University Librarian does NOT have our support.

HAMILTON, ONTARIO
L8S 4K1
HAMILTON HALL
ROOM 103A

905-525-9140
EXT. 24682

FAX: 905-522-8320
mufa@mcmaster.ca

MUFA on the WEB
<http://www.mcmaster.ca/mufa>

MUFA

SINCE 1951



McMASTER UNIVERSITY
FACULTY ASSOCIATION

HAMILTON, ONTARIO
L8S 4K1
HAMILTON HALL
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April 27, 2009

**TO: Peter George, President
Ilene Busch-Vishniac, Provost
Colum Bastable, Chair of the Board**

FROM: Richard Stubbs, John Berlinsky, and Peter Sutherland

We are writing regarding an action taken by the University against one of our members.

On Friday afternoon, at 2:30 pm, McMaster's Scholarly Communications Librarian, Ms. Barbara McDonald, was summarily dismissed. She was told, one week before she was to begin an approved one-year research leave, that her position had been declared redundant and that her employment at McMaster was terminated. She was not allowed to return to her office, and her e-mail account was closed. She was given a letter and required to leave the campus.

There have been repeated discussions with each of you about the callous treatment of employees which has become engrained in McMaster's Human Relations practices. In the case of Ms. McDonald, we consider the nature of the termination to be outrageous and the decision itself ill-considered. There are two reasons for this statement.

First, Ms. McDonald's position was declared redundant a week before the beginning of her approved leave. It is a Board-approved policy "... to encourage the engagement of librarians in research activities" and "... to support the Research Leave Policy." Declaring redundant the positions of librarians who are about to take an already-approved leave is an effective way of discouraging any librarian from ever applying for research leave again, in direct contradiction to the Board-approved policy. We note that under the Research Leave Policy for Librarians the operational and budgetary feasibility of granting leaves are factors considered as part of the approval process, which was completed only a few months ago.

Second, it will be a major challenge for the University to navigate the difficult financial times in which we are immersed. It has already been noted on several occasions, at the Board and elsewhere, that cooperation and trust will be required among all groups within the University in order for financial remedies to be implemented effectively. Trust is already an issue at McMaster, but there have been constructive discussions about how it can be restored so that the University can move forward cooperatively. However this and the recent elimination of the position of one other Librarian member have taken things in a completely opposite direction, into a

domain of conflict. The University should give serious thought to the question of whether that is where it wants to be.

We recognize that the University and each department within it face serious financial challenges and that the management of employee costs is a major part of that challenge. However, it is particularly important in difficult times for the University to work from an overall strategic plan, to be compassionate in the treatment of employees, and to respect the academic values of McMaster. Unfortunately, because of the involvement of an inexperienced manager and because the HR department seems singularly disconnected from McMaster's values and traditions, a bad decision has been made, one which is sufficiently bad that it should be reversed, both to right a wrong and to call attention to the fact that the University must hold itself to a higher standard if it is to have any hope of pulling together to survive in difficult times.

We will be happy to meet with you to discuss this matter further, but, in any case, we hope that McMaster will do the right thing, apologize to Ms. McDonald, and reinstate her in her position so that she can take up her research leave and return next year as an even more valuable and experienced McMaster Librarian. At the same time, we ask that the arrangement struck with Donna Millard be reconsidered so that she too may return to employment with McMaster at the end of her secondment.