



York University
Faculty Association

YUFA LIBRARY CHAPTER

12 May 2021

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Ana Serrano, President & Vice-Chancellor, OCADU
Office of the President, OCAD University
100 McCaul St, Toronto, ON M5T 1W1

Cc: Caroline Langill, Vice President and Provost Academic, OCADU
Cc: Jamie Watt, Chair, OCAD University Board of Governors and
Cc: Tony White, University Librarian

To President Serrano:

Librarian and archivist members of the York University Faculty Association were shocked to learn of the unprecedented action to eliminate six positions at the OCADU Library resulting in the layoff, essentially termination, of four senior librarian positions, namely, the Head, Reference & Instructional Services, Head, Visual Resources & Special Collections, Learning Zone Librarian, and Head, E Resources & E Learning.

We understand that the rationale for these layoffs, in fact terminations, was purportedly a restructuring exercise to address a budget deficit. We also understand that while six positions are being eliminated resulting in the termination of four librarians, four new positions are being created. Many of us who work in academic libraries have participated in restructuring exercises over recent years. These exercises have been consultative, taking place over several years, involving all levels of staff, and respecting rights enshrined in collective agreements. Furthermore, staff have assumed new roles and responsibilities as opposed to being terminated.

By his own admission (as reported in the Winter 2021 OCADU Library News Staff Profiles) the recently appointed University Librarian, Tony White, has found it “challenging to meet and get to know the library staff, workflows, and systems.” He says, “the same follows for getting to know the campus community. For example, I’ve met two library staff, and two buildings staff, one dean, and six security staff in person during two campus visits.” It raises the question of what evidence was used as the basis of a decision which has a profound impact on both the

delivery of library services to the OCADU community and the careers and livelihoods of long-serving professional librarians, all during a global pandemic.

Our OCADU academic librarian colleagues have stellar professional reputations within academic librarianship in Canada and beyond. For example, Daniel Payne, Head, Reference & Instructional Services, is known for his work relating to Indigenous visual culture and decolonization and is currently engaged in a Covid related collaborative creation research project with faculty at OCADU and the University of Manitoba funded by a Canada Council Strategic Initiatives Digital Futures COVID-19 Grant.

OCADU librarians are also known for their leadership and innovation in their areas of expertise. In fact, the recently appointed University Librarian, Tony White, in the same profile states:

When I was the Director of Decker Library at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) I visited OCAD University's Library and Learning Zone and was inspired by what the library was attempting to do here. In fact, after visiting the Learning Zone and seeing the ceiling mounted extension cords, I returned to MICA and had them installed all throughout the library. They were very popular! And I credited OCADU's Learning Zone in my library newsletter.

<https://ocadu.libguides.com/Winter2021/LibraryNews/StaffProfiles>

It is therefore surprising that Marta Chudolinska, the OCADU Learning Zone Librarian for over a decade, was one of those librarians laid off, that is, terminated. Meanwhile Victoria Sigurdson has spearheaded digitization initiatives at the OCADU Library for over ten years and Alex Homanchuk served as Head of E-Learning and E-Learning Support for close to a decade.

As we can attest, academic librarians have played a critical role in providing library services to students and faculty during the significant challenges of the pandemic. That they should be terminated during this difficult time and despite their extraordinary efforts is beyond appalling. Furthermore, academic librarians in Canada have long enjoyed strong rights and protections accorded under their collective agreements. They serve as equal partners in institutions which respect and uphold traditions of collegial governance. That the rights and protections of OCADU librarians have been so blatantly violated and their tremendous contributions over decades of service so devalued by the University Librarian, Tony White, with less than one year in his new role, and with the knowledge and consent of senior OCADU administration is a stain on the reputation of the institution.

On behalf of the librarian and archivist members of the York University Faculty Association we ask the Administration of the Ontario College of Art and Design University to reinstate our four esteemed librarian colleagues: Daniel Payne, Marta Chudolinska, Victoria Sigurdson and Alex Homanchuk.

Sincerely,

Lisa Sloniowski

on behalf of the librarians and archivists of the York University Faculty Association
Associate Librarian, York University
Union Steward, York University Faculty Association