

May 20, 2021

Sent by email

To: Ana Serrano, President & Vice Chancellor of OCAD University

Dear President Serrano (aserrano@ocadu.org):

We, the undersigned Professional Librarians at the University of Lethbridge, are writing to express deep concern regarding the recent OCAD Library reorganization that resulted in the lay-off of four academic librarians.

As residents of Alberta, we are keenly aware of the financial pressures wrought by government underfunding of higher education and the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, restructuring efforts must proceed with care, meaningful consultation, and respect for collegial processes. According to the information we have received, this has not happened at OCAD U. In fact, it has been reported that your new University Librarian has only been with you for a year, and by his own admission in a recent newsletter, stated it was “challenging to meet and get to know the library staff, workflows, and systems.” This seems like a poor foundation on which to base such a drastic library reorganization. We suggest that an effective library reorganization would necessarily involve active participation in the decision-making process by all stakeholders, including library staff and users, within the OCAD U community.

While academic libraries and the people who make them work so seamlessly are often poorly understood by the general public, this should not be the case within universities. While library salaries are a line on a spreadsheet, they are also one of the best investments you can make in your own institution. According to the OCAD U [May 14 statement](#), “the reorganization will also expand the Library’s capacity to support students and faculty across the University.” How this aim is advanced by the termination of four well-respected librarians with over 70 years of service, however, remains unclear.

We share the concerns of your own University Librarian Emerita, Jill Patrick, who retired in 2020 after 30 years of service to OCADU: *“The precipitative loss of so much expertise, at one time, represents a significant risk for the University and there will be negative consequences for those who have come to rely on the wide range of services that these four librarians offer.”*

This approach to restructuring has already negatively impacted your institution’s reputation, which, in turn, may hamper its ability to attract and retain qualified, dedicated academic staff to accomplish its teaching, research, and learning missions in the future. We urge you to reconsider this decision, reinstate your four librarians, and to make restructuring decisions through collegial processes.

Sincerely,
Paula Cardozo
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Romany Craig
Nicole Eva
Rumi Graham
Mary Greenshields

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