

## Regarding the recent Inforum announcement

Jordan Hale [jordan.hale@utoronto.ca]

**Sent:** Friday, February 23, 2018 10:03 AM

**To:** Wendy Duff

**Cc:** Lari Langford; Nadia Moro; Anna Oh; Eden Rusnell; Kathleen Scheaffer; Nalini Singh; Elisa Sze; Meera Thirunavukarasu; misc@utoronto.ca; mussa.ischool@utoronto.ca; fiaa.president@gmail.com

Dear Professor Duff,

I am writing to express my great disappointment to learn of the unexpected end of the Inforum's collections. I was astonished by the belated and insufficient communications from faculty administration, and heard of this two weeks ago, long before an official announcement was made. I write to object to both this decision, which I see as a great detriment to research, teaching and learning in the field of information, and the means in which it was conveyed to the iSchool community, which betrays an awareness of multiple errors of judgment. Given what I learned over the course of my LIS degree – project management, evaluation of information systems, and effective communication and consultation with library users and colleagues, among other things – I am appalled by the fact that this decision was carried out through means that entirely contradicted everything I was taught just last year.

I am a recent graduate of the Faculty of Information, as well as a cataloguer at the University of Toronto Libraries, and have been a user of the Inforum's collections since before I commenced my MI degree. The comprehensive range of materials there are a gift to practitioners and researchers at UofT and beyond. To cloak the dissemination of resources across campus libraries as a reminder of the importance of serendipity in research ignores that many, if not most of us, were aware of this through our own undergraduate and graduate work, long before we arrived in this faculty. Sending a great proportion of Inforum materials to the Engineering & Computer Science Library creates additional access barriers for users, especially given the one to three flights of stairs that separate users from collections. Removing the collections from the Inforum will ostensibly "create lively busy spaces to help establish a sense of identity and enable possibilities for social and intellectual exchange". Crediting these transformations to architecture alone is a great underestimation of those who use and work in the Inforum.

As a publishing researcher, two-time UofT graduate student, and dedicated reference staff member, I have developed a nuanced understanding of the research supports that UTL provides to graduate students and faculty, as I both depend upon it and provide it. To detach the collections from the library and further minimize the working space of the library will be a great blow. I cannot imagine carrying out my own reference work without access to the materials researchers need to consult. Graduate students obviously do not have the office bookshelf budgets of faculty, and rely upon this proximity even more. Interrupting the natural flows of reference consultations through these arbitrary and highly limiting barriers to accessing information sends discouraging messages to staff and students alike about the Inforum's commitment to facilitating knowledge production.

Through my work at the library, I consider the affected staff of the Inforum to be my colleagues, as well as great supports during my degree. I am appalled by the incredible disrespect that you have shown them and their collective decades of service to the faculty through this "consultation" process – indeed, this is the opposite of the collegiality and professionalism that I have come to expect from the UTL community. Given the context of its release, the email announcement that finally announced this downsizing was additionally insulting given that it did not address those who work there. Claiming that working groups and studies came to conclusions that were not addressed during their meetings is insulting to those who volunteered their time to work on them. This surprise decision also demonstrates a lack of respect for those of us working at Robarts, ECSL, and elsewhere, who are disrupted by the sudden need to integrate these resources into their collections – this was even news to the heads of impacted departments. The relatively minor shifting project that I planned and managed at the Map &

Data Library took several months to carry out. What about the staff who work there whose jobs are dedicated to collections? Union collective agreements would prohibit their absorption into the UTL central libraries.

The condescending tone, transparent untruths, and gaping absences in Tuesday's announcement seemed familiar to me: they felt like a Sean Spicer press briefing, where key questions – what impact will these policies have on real people – remain ignored, but entirely unrelated talking points, like the TALint program, are buttressed. The Faculty of Information feels more like a degree mill than an institution committed to research, teaching and learning, and this short-sighted decision confirms these instincts. I request that this decision be put on hold and put through a proper consultation process, one that very clearly identifies the effects on staff – and actually involves them.

Sincerely,

Jordan Hale  
MA, MI

Cc:  
Lari Langford  
Nadia Moro  
Anna Oh  
Eden Rusnell  
Kathleen Scheaffer  
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Meera Thirunavukarasu  
Doctoral Students Association (please note I do not have an email address for them, please forward along)  
Master of Information Student Council  
Museum Studies Students Association  
Faculty of Information Alumni Association