

regarding the future of the stacks

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Sent: Monday, March 05, 2018 2:40 PM

To: Wendy Duff

Cc: Nalini Singh; Kathleen Scheaffer; Elisa Sze; MISC (Master of Information Student Council) [misc.ischool@gmail.com]

Dear Dean Duff,

As a second year student in the MI program and a student assistant at the Inforum, I am writing in support of the many voices who have requested that the decision to redistribute our collection be halted until thorough consultation with all relevant stakeholder groups (students, librarians, technicians, faculty and alumni) takes place before moving forward with any plan to radically alter the Inforum and its services. Working at the circulation desk I've seen first hand how the collection serves to bring together various members of our community. As I will soon be graduating, I've felt reassured that I would have public access to this familiar space where I could revisit our collection and find support for whatever unforeseen professional development or research interests I may have in the future. I've seen many alumni return to find resources typically preparing for new professional roles or job interviews.

Currently, the Inforum is a unique community space that brings together our community for feedback, critical dialogue, collaboration and emotional support. I predict that the breakdown of our collection would contribute to a fragmenting of our student body and broader network of professionals, alumni, faculty and students, changing the meaning and purpose of the Inforum, which I imagine would feel like a lounge space.

I've heard many students voice concerns around accessibility. Our collection is well maintained, regularly shelved, shelf-read, and conveniently consolidated with a friendly technician or student assistant prepared to help students find materials. I'm proud of the attentive service we offer and am concerned that our ability as library staff will be limited if the collection is dispersed as proposed. Finding materials within Robart's sprawling stacks is an entirely different experience, the scale of the area and lack of available aids in the upper floors means the shelves are often unruly, and I frequently struggle to retrieve the books I seek at Robarts.

The collection represents our identity, the common interest in our holdings brings people together. I've proudly shown the collection to prospective students and invite them to come and browse the collection, an invaluable entry point for those new to our diverse fields of study here at the iSchool. I can attest to the value of the print collection in discovering new research interests and finding connections that have been incredibly helpful during my time in this program. Serendipitous finds within our well curated collection has led me to many surprising and enriching resources.

Beyond my concerns around the future of the print collection, I would like to echo the calls that many community members have made that administration participate in open and transparent consultation before moving forward. With good will and patience I'm confident that creative solutions to the problems of space use and design can be solved through open and constructive conversation with the people who know the space best. A petition drafted on this topic features many productive comments about potential alternative solutions to this proposal. There must be a way to move forward that sees more of our community satisfied and engaged through collective re-imagining of our shared future and the identity of our spaces. I am optimistic that a better outcome is still possible and await further news.

3/5/2018

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Thank you for your consideration.

Margaux Smith