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[address removed]

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Dr. Wendy Duff, Professor and Dean  
Faculty of Information (iSchool)  
140 St. George Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 3G6

Dear Dean Duff,

As a past alumna of the Faculty of Information, I have many positive memories of the Inforum, but two really stand out: 1) the Inforum as a meeting place for academic and social activities with classmates and studying at various corners; 2) the impact the Inforum staff had during my time as a library science student and as I was beginning my professional career as a librarian. I was disappointed in hearing about the planning of the removal of the print collection items from the Inforum. With this letter, I aim to express my concerns about this decision, which I heard, was taken without consulting the Inforum staff or the students at the iSchool.

I would like to provide below some examples of how I have used Inforum resources. The purpose of this letter is to convey the importance of a space dedicated to supporting a specific user group, in particular, future or recent librarians. I realize that the user groups you service are broader than this, but I cannot speak for other user groups, I am most familiar with my experience as a librarian.

I have used many and varied resources from the Inforum, both in print and online for various projects throughout the years, including a collection inventory, writing project reports and summaries, conducting surveys, creating a proposal for the very first TALInt position, finding resources for web administrators, finding resources for improving my online searching skills in advanced health sciences database at the beginning of my career, seeking support for literature review in library related topics, and much more. I am always surprised at the breadth and depth of the collection of library science and information management resources, which are no doubt available due to the expertise of past and current collectors, such as Elisa.

Furthermore, the newly renovated space at the Inforum reflects the staff's understanding of modern study needs. I recently visited the Inforum to see the iRelax space and how Kathleen has researched and implemented a space for students where they can practice wellness exercises. She spent in person and email time with me describing how the space was conceptualized and executed. I believe this was the first such space at a UofT library and others have since followed her guidance to build similar spaces at their locations.

The staff at the Inforum will always be remembered by me as friendly, knowledgeable and helpful. Nalini and other Inforum staff were instrumental during my time as a student to help

me figure out how to use the space and collection efficiently. While I was a new graduate looking for library jobs, she provided me with resources to support job searching and improve my interviewing skills. Most importantly, at the beginning of my career, she helped me find resources for planning my first projects. I was not able to find any other resource or service on UofT campus that understood the needs of a new information professional as the staff at the Inforum did.

The relationships I built with the Inforum staff have lasted throughout the years and I am very concerned to know that future information professionals will not have the opportunity to be in a separate space with individuals who dedicate their day to support them. The separate space is really the key to building those relationships, and I am not convinced that the same support could be provided if the staff is located elsewhere on campus. Having this type of embedded support is extremely important for graduate students who face many time, financials and other burdens during their studies and as recent graduates entering the workforce. As an embedded librarian myself, this letter is biased. I realize that and I acknowledge its faults. I can, however, tell you that I would not last all these years in my current role if it were not for the relationships I have built as an embedded librarian with students, staff and researchers here at Dentistry. It is a continuous source of energy that drives my initial passion of helping people find information that I had when I began library school. The proximity to the user group I service has played a key role in my understanding of dental research and has improved my skill set to provide support.

I understand your challenges. It is extremely difficult for you as an administrator to justify the operational costs of a small library while considering the monetary return of investment. As researchers, we can conduct studies to show service value. If one were to conduct a study on the benefits of embedded library support to graduate students and recent graduates locally, I suspect that the findings would have weight on the decision to keep it. UofT students are burdened with financial, time management, and other stressors, having local support that meets their needs can really make a difference.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter as an attempt to highlight the importance of the Inforum as a service point at the Faculty of Information based on my experience.

Kind regards,

Maria