

## The Inforum Collection

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**Sent:** Monday, February 26, 2018 8:02 PM

**To:** Wendy Duff; Lari Langford

**Cc:** Kathleen Scheaffer; Nalini Singh; Elisa Sze

Dean Duff:

I am writing to you to voice my protest to the plans involving the "re-distribution" of the Inforum's physical library collection. The most recent decision to keep only the Course Reserves but to proceed with plans to re-distribute the remainder of the collection is unacceptable. The fact that you are announcing this as a finalized matter with no recourse is very alarming. As well, the fact that you are continuing the narrative of "either/or" as relates to "either we can have more study space in the Inforum and no physical collection of books" OR "we can have a physical collection but no more room for study spaces" is short-sighted and simply untrue. Finally, I find it suspect that the most recent MISC student council meeting was scheduled on the Family Day statutory holiday and during Reading Week at a time when many students were not around. I understand that there may have been factors outside of your decision-making behind that, but I stand by my assessment. There needs to be a much greater transparency in communicating any and all changes of this nature to the iSchool community and not just little bits and pieces floating around from different sources until one official email is sent.

I am a Student Assistant at the Inforum, and as such, I represent its values, which include the larger mission of libraries as facilitators of access to the best information possible, as well as for fair and equal access to that information. I take that commitment very seriously, which is why I absolutely refuse to participate in the willful destruction of this collection, which has historical value and represents decades of hard work and dedication of staff members. Additionally, it is essential that the Inforum's collection remains intact and is kept in one place for ease of access and for discoverability. I cannot emphasize enough how many times patrons have thanked me for assisting them to find resources that are shelved closely together when they have been assigned projects without any clue on where to start.

In addition, this plan to redistribute the collection, mostly to Robarts, does not take into account accessibility concerns, which I find highly distressing as a person with a visible disability. Going to Robarts to retrieve books already presents many accessibility barriers for me, which makes it incredibly difficult for me to gain access to information from books that I need in order to complete my assignments and to conduct research. What about students who have wheelchairs and mobility devices or other accessibility concerns in our faculty? I question how you can justify thinking it is acceptable to take away our agency in this decision and to disregard our voices completely.

Splitting up the Inforum's books would also mean that iSchool students, facing additional steps in order to access information that should be as readily available to them as possible, would be less likely to go the extra mile to find these materials to check them out (if at all), which would give you justification to send these materials to off-site storage at Downsview where they would be put behind even greater barriers, only accessible by inter-library loan to the students who are aware they can request them in this way. One of the biggest reasons why it is so important that the Inforum has a physical collection is so that our patrons can use it and so that we can quickly direct them, as Inforum staff and information professionals, to the materials and resources they need as efficiently and as expediently as possible. I have met several iSchool alumni who continue to use the Inforum's collection for their professional development and would not have the same opportunities at Robarts.

You may try to make the argument that many, if not most, of these physical resources will be scheduled for digitization and assume that most students would prefer that. I would like to point out that as you well know, digitization comes with its own set of problems, including the loss of data, potential for corrupted files or files that do not display properly on different devices, the consequences of when files become unreadable because of advances in technology, as well as the human element in labour necessary to digitize such items. This is why it is important to have a hybrid of materials that are available in both print and electronic formats. As a Student Assistant, I can personally vouch for the fact that, although this may surprise you, several students prefer accessing print resources.

I would also like to address this administration's communication issues toward both the Inforum staff as well as to the student body and faculty. First, the lack of transparency in making a decision to end 24/7 fob access to the Inforum for students was handled very poorly. Even when a survey was sent out asking students to indicate the hours they needed the Inforum the most, as well as the days, this happened after the decision to end 24/7 access proceeded. In this case, with regards to the Inforum's collection, there was even less communication, and I question how this decision is being allowed to barrel forward. Because of this, you have eradicated a great deal of both trust and accountability and have raised questions in the minds of several in the iSchool community about what other information pertaining to important changes is not being communicated to us.

Please reconsider your decision regarding our collection.

Anita Siraki  
Inforum Student Assistant