

March 27, 2018

Dear Dean Duff,

With interest I read the Inforum update posted on February 27, 2018 inviting commentary about the decision to move the Inforum's remaining print collection to other University of Toronto libraries, primarily Robarts. As a graduate of the iSchool, I would like to take this opportunity to share my thoughts.

My internship at the Inforum was essential to the launch of my library career as the experience it afforded me provided a critical connection to the profession and the experience I needed. Part of that connection was provided via the Inforum's print collection as I recommended books in response to reference questions, provided access to the high-use reserve collection and as I worked to update MARC records for print serials. While I understand the library of the future may have fewer print materials, in the here-and-now libraries continue to live in the bifurcated world of print and electronic resources and probably will for some time to come. Students and student assistants alike need experience with both; to limit their access and experience to only electronic resources would unnecessarily detract from their academic and professional development.

I have also read the student response and agree that separating the collection from the trained library professionals who know it best means iSchool students will not be able to benefit from the wisdom of those who curated the collection with their needs in mind.


My understanding is that these deliberations about the future of the Inforum's print collection have not followed the traditional governance processes ordained by the Faculty of Information. I am concerned that important considerations may have been overlooked, or not shared, as a result. For example, who will purchase new material for these subject areas? Who will process and catalogue these items? What will happen to the Inforum's collections budget – will the print portion of the budget also go to Robarts? In essence, who will be the future steward of Faculty of Information subjects in U of T's massive library infrastructure? It seems completely possible there will be no one at the helm, putting iSchool students and faculty at a disadvantage.

It saddens me to write this letter. It appears that instead of leveraging the Inforum as the unique strategic strength it is (or was), this jewel of the iSchool is instead being gradually dismantled as the years go by. The Inforum is the hub and heart of the iSchool. The question is how to build on it, not how to take it apart. I would challenge the iSchool to consider the following:

- Given the rising trend towards experiential and work-integrated learning, is there a way to integrate the Inforum and its current collection into the curriculum? Could it be a living lab of sorts?
- Are there really no other spaces in Bissell that could be converted into additional study space?

In summary, this move is self-defeating in an oddly paradoxical way in that it denigrates one of the professions the faculty was established to promote.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this process.

  
name removed upon request  
iSchool MI alumnus