



∴ ontario college and university library association

January 15, 2018

Rick Anderson, Director of Student Services
Saint Lawrence College
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Dear Mr. Anderson,

I am writing on behalf of the Ontario College and University Library Association (OCULA) to express our concern over the recent decision to remove Saint Lawrence College's only professional librarian.

Founded in 1900, the Ontario Library Association (OLA) is the oldest continually operating non-profit library association in Canada. A division of OLA, OCULA represents over 600 College and University library faculty and staff on issues of common concern across the province. We are experts in the organization of information and ideas, and are positioned to support research and development at academic institutions.

We were surprised and extremely disappointed to learn that Saint Lawrence College has eliminated Jill Baker's position - currently the only professional librarian to serve 100% of their time towards Saint Lawrence College's Brockville, Cornwall, and Kingston campus libraries. Based on the job posting, it appears that the new Associate Director of Libraries and Student Services who will replace this position will focus only 20% of their time on the Libraries and Learning Commons. It seems unreasonable and unrealistic to expect anyone to perform a long list of library-related job duties with such a dramatic reduction (80%) in time dedicated to library services. Our concern is that this reduction will have a negative impact on the delivery of library services and, by extension, on student success and faculty support.

Academic literacies instruction is an essential component of higher education. It includes teaching critical literacies to students who will work and live in an information economy, but also supporting faculty as they both develop student assignments and conduct their own research. Now, more than ever, the incredible abundance of information at our disposal requires skilled scrutiny and evaluation. Yet one of the critical workforce challenges of the 21st century is that students are entering the workforce with insufficient information and digital literacy skills (Head, 2012).

Librarians contribute to many student literacies including information and digital literacy (teaching students to find, assess, process, create, organize and cite reliable information) and

media literacy (teaching students to find and critically evaluate information produced by multiple media outlets in various mediums). These skills are essential in an age of 'fake news', where information is produced at a staggering rate by many questionable entities. Students need to learn how to critically and ethically analyse, use, and produce information.

Beyond these valuable contributions to a student's education, librarians also support faculty to develop their research assignments, helping to ensure they are adequate and exemplary resources for their teaching and learning. As well, librarians help faculty to integrate online resources and technology into their teaching, and support research projects both for the individual faculty and college level research. Even more, librarians act as faculty research partners to help faculty navigate the intricate information landscape. They help faculty with research impact, publishing, copyright, and scholarly communication, which have all been proven to strengthen the profile of an institution (Burpee & Fernandez, 2014).

A library requires many skilled individuals to fully deliver quality services and resources, and the majority of College libraries in Ontario recognize that librarians are an integral part of this team. Libraries themselves are changing, but their relevance is ever more critical. Librarians are information specialists and essential stewards for students who are navigating the rapidly changing information landscape. Without at least one 100% professional librarian applying their scope of knowledge, education and training to evaluating, maintaining and updating the online and other resources your library provides for students, negative repercussions on student learning are inevitable. Unintended consequences of this decision may include a reduced ability to attract students and faculty, and poorer quality assessments for your degree-granting programs.

We urge you to reconsider the decision to replace the only 100% dedicated professional librarian position at Saint Lawrence College with an Associate Director of Library and Learning Commons that only dedicates 20% time to libraries. We respect that we do not know the full circumstances in which this decision was made. In addition to an Associate Director position, we believe that a 100% dedicated librarian is necessary as part of the library team. Please make, what we believe, to be the right choice now for the good of your students, and the reputation of your institution.

Sincerely,



Sarah Shujah

2017 President, Ontario College and University Library Association

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Works Cited

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Head, A.J. (2012). [Learning curve: How college graduates solve information problems once they join the workplace](#). Project Information Literacy, Passage Studies Research Report.