

## **Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians (CAPAL)<sup>1</sup>**

### **CAPAL's Statement to the Royal Society of Canada, Expert Panel**

#### **"The Status and Future of Canada's Libraries and Archives"**

**March 1, 2014**

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Royal Society of Canada's review of the status and future of Canada's libraries and archives. The Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians (CAPAL) is a national membership organization representing the interests of professional academic librarians in relation to the areas of education, standards, professional practice, ethics, and core principles.<sup>2</sup> CAPAL differs from other library associations in that it is an advocacy group focused on individual professional librarians and the discipline of academic librarianship.<sup>3</sup>

In response to your queries, members of CAPAL's Steering Committee have reviewed the mandate of the Expert Panel on the website (<https://rsc-src.ca/en/expert-panels/rsc-reports/status-and-future-canadas-libraries-and-archives>), several reports submitted to the Expert Panel and some of the framing questions employed by library associations. The task of reviewing the future of Canada's libraries and archives, in all sectors and at all levels, is a daunting and challenging project, given their scope, complexity and diversity.

The one topic, which has not been mentioned in your mandate, is the professional role of librarians and archivists in the future of Canada's libraries and archives. CAPAL views this as a core requirement for the future, whether it pertains to corporate, public or national libraries. Without professional librarians and archivists, there is no long-term, sustainable future for Canada's libraries and archives and no one to lead, direct and ensure that the right decisions are being made according to professional standards, core principles, ethical guidelines and knowledgeable expertise. In the absence of trained, knowledgeable, professional librarians and/or archivists leading and guiding institutions through transitional periods, experience has resulted in the destruction of years of work and loss of valuable collections can be lost in recent times. The recent loss and dismantling of research collections as a result of closures of the federal government libraries is one example,<sup>4</sup> as is the decline of Library and Archives Canada (LAC) over a period of time resulting in the loss of access to scientific knowledge, research and threats to Canada's

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians / L'Association canadienne des bibliothécaires académiques professionnels. Website: <http://capalibrarians.org/> and <http://fr.capalibrarians.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> CAPAL, Mission Statement, URL: <http://capalibrarians.org/mission/> Feb. 25, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Academic librarians are academics, with a minimum of a Masters Degree in Information Studies or Library Science from an ALA accredited institution, often with additional, discipline specific masters, doctoral degrees or professional degrees, such as law, MBA, nursing, etc. Academic librarians are employed in educational or research institutes dedicated to high levels of teaching, learning and research.

<sup>4</sup> UT Librarians Blog, "Closure of Federal Libraries – Documents and Update on Closures" (Jan. 31, 2014) URL: <http://utlibrarians.wordpress.com/2014/01/31/closure-of-federal-libraries-documents-and-update-on-closures/> Accessed Feb. 28, 2014.

cultural, social and political heritage. These events greatly concern CAPAL members.<sup>5</sup> CAPAL places a high value on freedom of information, research and knowledge-creation to uphold our principles in a democratic society. Further workplace devaluation and deprofessionalization of librarianship in Canada has been observed at all levels and sectors.

We are a relatively new organization that formed in 2012 in response to growing challenges that academic librarians have faced.<sup>6</sup> The catalyst for this effort was the symposium “Academic Librarianship: A Crisis or Opportunity” held at the University of Toronto on November 18, 2011.<sup>7</sup> The response from librarians was overwhelming and the message was clear. The concerns of academic librarians were not being addressed by current associations in Canada. A core working group began to review the terrain and explore what would be required to create such an organization. Discussions continued through 2012, with the core group gradually expanding to include other participants across Canada.<sup>8</sup>

### **Current Challenges Confronting Academic Librarians**

Academic librarians build, maintain and curate collections and resources, serve and support advanced levels of learning, research and teaching in academic communities. In order to build and sustain the future of academic research and teaching libraries, it is important for governments representatives, universities and post-secondary institutions to respect the professional rights, roles, autonomy and core principles of librarians. The following are some of the most pressing challenges that academic librarians are currently confronting in the workplace devaluation and the deprofessionalization of librarians’ roles:

- a general lack of understanding pertaining to the professional roles and responsibilities of academic librarians in academic communities
- institutional prioritizing of monetary goals over the core values and principles which have traditionally guided, built and curated academic libraries
- institutional adoption of the latest trends without sufficient analysis, review and critique which results in the dismantling of core, valued services and collections which cannot be rebuilt
- the employment of technology as a rationale for not considering the traditional, core values and principles upon which the profession has been built
- administrators who do not put the interests of the institutions at the forefront of their decision making
- the suppression or elimination of workplace forums where professional opinions critique, assess and review the best standards, options, midst rapid changes in the field

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<sup>5</sup> For a timeline of events see, CAPAL website, <http://capalibrarians.org/2014/01/time-line-the-closure-of-canadian-government-libraries-archives-and-research-collections/> Accessed Feb. 25, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Penni Stewart, “Academic Librarians Are under Attack,” *CAUT Bulletin* 56:10 (December 2009). URL: [http://www.cautbulletin.ca/en\\_article.asp?articleid=2958](http://www.cautbulletin.ca/en_article.asp?articleid=2958) . Accessed Oct. 27, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Diane Granfield, Mary Kandiuk, Harriet Sonne de Torrens, “Academic Librarianship: A Crisis or an Opportunity,” *Partnership: the Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2011): 1-6. URL: <https://journal.lib.uoguelph.ca/index.php/perj/article/view/1678/2239#.Um3CaBAQMRO>

<sup>8</sup> “CAPAL: The Formation of a Professional Organization for Canadian Academic Librarians,” *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library Information Practice and Research* vol. 8:2 (2013), URL: <https://journal.lib.uoguelph.ca/index.php/perj/article/view/2800#.UwyyboWmVTw> Accessed Feb. 25, 2014.

Today, in post-secondary institutions across Canada academic librarians are actively seeking to maintain:

- the right to participate in collegial governance at all levels
- the right to academic freedom for scholarship and research<sup>9</sup>
- the intellectual right to openly critique and voice their professional views, even when opposing administrative viewpoints
- the right to participate in a meaningful way in academic restructuring

### **Education of Academic Librarians**

For the future of academic institutions, the education and training of academic librarians needs to be reviewed. More specialized programs and higher standards of academic excellence, knowledge and specialized training are needed to meet the future needs of researchers and academic communities. Administrators of library and information studies programs have focused on increased enrollments at the expense of building programs to sustain our profession. Priorities have shifted from quality education to budgetary bottom lines.

### **Library and Archives Canada**

Recent changes at LAC have resulted in paradigmatic shifts that will have a deleterious impact on academic libraries across Canada, especially, at larger provincial institutions. CAPAL members consider the recent actions pertaining to the LAC and the National Archival Development Program (NADP) undertaken by the Ministry of Heritage in conflict with their responsibility to Canadian citizens to value, preserve and sustain this country's documentary heritage. These actions and the long term ramifications deprive Canadian citizens of their rights to free and unrestricted access to information concerning their heritage. Current legislation to protect the mandate of LAC as a national library and archive for Canada seems to have provided little protection under the current government's political agenda. This concerns CAPAL members.

Other negative changes at LAC have resulted in Canada being without a national bibliography, repository and archive. A national library and archive is an expression of national identity and a repository of Canada's national heritage. Moving forward the CAPAL recommends the following:

- The Chief Librarian/Archivist of LAC needs to be a trained, experienced professional Librarian/Archivist who has had a career as a Librarian/Archivist
- LAC needs to be governed by an independent board which includes professional librarians and archivists that has an arms-length distance from government interference
- New legislation needs to be formulated so that, under all circumstances, a national repository and archive is firmly secured and not subject to the priorities, political agendas or ideology of ruling political parties.

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<sup>9</sup> Jim Turk, CAUT, "Academic Freedom for Librarians: What is it, and why does it matter?" (August 25, 2010): 1-12, URL: [www.library.mcgill.ca/mautlib/2010.08.25\\_McGill\\_Librarians.pdf](http://www.library.mcgill.ca/mautlib/2010.08.25_McGill_Librarians.pdf) Accessed Feb. 25, 2014.

- Legislation which governs LAC must comply with Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom and Constitution of Canada.

LAC has a responsibility to:

- operate in a transparent manner and ensure the activities and projects of LAC are well known across the country, to citizens and professionals in the various fields
- ensure that LAC employees are actively engaged with library associations and have the freedom to openly discuss issues, share knowledge and concerns
- ensure collections and LAC are managed according to the core values and ethics of librarianship / archival practices and not superficial, monetary priorities which shift with the politicians
- work closely with associations in Canada, USA and Internationally
- ensure long-term goals are maintained
- ensure LAC operates according the Canadian legislation
- ensure LAC truly is a national repository for Canadians
- ensure LAC is not threatened by changing political ideology
- ensure that LAC shows the proper respect for Canada's heritage

We conclude this submission with the hope that the Expert Panel's Report will be able to have a meaningful impact on the challenges confronting the future of Canada's libraries and archives. And to say, that even though CAPAL is still in its infancy, should the opportunity arise to assist further in this endeavour, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Members of the CAPAL Steering Committee, February 28, 2014.

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