



February 20, 2019

Dr. Chris Nicol, University Librarian  
University of Lethbridge  
4401 University Drive W  
Lethbridge, AB T1K 3M4

**Re: Instructor II position at the University of Lethbridge Library**

Dear Dr. Nicol,

The Canadian Association of Academic Librarians/l' Association canadienne des bibliothécaires en enseignement supérieur (CAPAL/ACBES) is writing to condemn the January 26th, 2019, advertisement of the proposed Instructor II position at the University of Lethbridge Library because the position does not require a Master's of Library and Information Science (MLIS) or equivalent. Information literacy and research skills are taught in context across universities and colleges through many avenues; a recognized library degree, with professional training and experience, provides specific competencies and an understanding that is essential to library instruction, research skills, and the teaching of information literacy in the library setting. Even long-time tenured faculty rely on professional librarians to acquire the skills and expertise to navigate and understand the web of information and the necessary concomitant research skills, including the ability to situate and contextualize information, understand its evolutionary and contested nature, as well as the processes associated with knowledge creation, dissemination, and preservation.

The teaching of information literacy and the provision of research and reference services are foundational areas of professional practice in librarianship. The position, as advertised, raises issues regarding the de-professionalization of librarianship and the lowering of standards in key library services provided by academic libraries. In reviewing the position announcement, the CAPAL Advocacy Committee has noted that the position requires:

- *A Master's degree and experience working in an academic library*

- *Demonstrated experience in delivering relevant and reflexive information literacy instruction in collaboration with other academic staff, to promote student success and retention*

In fact, elsewhere the announcement states a master's degree is "preferred," raising questions about the actual academic requirements of the position.

A general master's degree, by comparison, contains little to no formal training in instruction or information management. It is focused on increasing subject depth, often related to a professional career or pre-requisite to the doctoral level. The focus is on discipline-specific content, not research skills, literacy training, or library competencies. As such, a position such as the Instructor II, advertised with the requirement of a master's degree, will harm both the quality of education received by students at the University of Lethbridge and the profession of librarianship itself. Though an instructor position is financially appealing, it comes at the cost of disciplinary expertise, not to mention the erosion of collegial participation and peer review that is required to effectively service deliver and sound curriculum design.

Librarians have the requisite expertise to go beyond the teaching of general skills and competencies to include the examination and critique of information environments, information ethics, as well as the exploration of information as a human right and corollary social justice issues. The goal of information literacy instruction is to ensure that university graduates are discriminate information consumers and producers, as well as engaged citizens. Dismissing the requirement of MLIS-based expertise will not help students achieve these goals. The professoriate across Canadian universities rely on librarians' knowledge regarding information sources and usage precisely because they lack the requisite expertise themselves. The library instructional programming at the University of Lethbridge, as currently envisioned, will develop a large disciplinary hole for students who are to be led by non-librarian information literacy instructors.

Furthermore, under such an arrangement there will be two tiers of library faculty at the University of Lethbridge. For the library itself, librarian-delivered instruction will be removed as an integral part of the subject librarians' work. This decision will de-link instruction from the research cycle and from collection development, for which librarians are constitutive in contemporary post-secondary institutions, and will reduce the institution's capacity to compete effectively in the current information landscape. Within those tiers, instruction will be reduced to a mechanical role of information delivery, not literacy education.

Finally, the "wide range of library initiatives" expected of the position hints at the planned erosion of responsibilities currently covered by professional librarians. This approach undermines the development of the innovative programming the University of Lethbridge Library aspires to in the position announcement. Creating such an Instructor II position will also not serve the professional development of the librarians at the University of Lethbridge. It will, however, redefine the scope of their positions and limit their participation in developing and delivering robust library instruction and research support.

CAPAL has observed elsewhere the devolution and devaluation of librarianship to non-professionals as a means to save money, and this has wrought significant damage to the communities these libraries serve. We strongly urge the University of Lethbridge not to also go down that path.

*CAPAL/ACBES is a national organization representing academic librarians and the profession of academic librarianship in Canada. Our mission is to promote, advance, and support the profession of academic librarianship for the advancement of research, teaching, and learning at accredited post-secondary institutions and to further the professional interests of our members. We believe that our academic communities are enriched when academic librarians are respected, supported and recognized as equal academic partners in the building of excellent teaching and research communities.*

Respectfully,  
CAPAL/ACBES Board of Directors

Anna Wilson (University of Alberta)

Lisa Richmond (Wheaton College)

Doug Fox (Victoria University in the University of Toronto)

Mona Elayyan (York University)

Laura Koltutsky (University of Calgary)

Emma Popowich (University of Manitoba)

Maha Kumaran (University of Saskatchewan)

Afra Bolefski (University of Manitoba)

Tracy Zahradnik (University of Toronto)

Jeff Lilburn (Mount Allison)

cc: Andrea Amelinckx, President, University of Lethbridge Faculty Association  
Andrew Hakin, Provost & VP Academic, University of Lethbridge