

Faculty Times

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A UWOFA Newsletter

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First in national rankings, last in salary — the Western way!

By Aniko Varpalotai, Professor & Chief Negotiator (UWOFA-LA)

On October 21, the Globe and Mail released its annual rankings of student satisfaction with universities across Canada (The Canadian University Report 2010). Once again, Western's Librarians and Archivists shared first place with the University of Toronto and McGill University. Ironically, this report was released on the eve of possibly the first strike in UWOFA's history, as the Librarian and Archivist Bargaining Unit begins its final scheduled week of negotiations in its renewal of its collective agreement.

At the time of certification in 2004, the then released External Review Report — Western Libraries

University of Western Ontario (October 3, 2004 — the external reviewers were the Chief Librarians from the University of Toronto (Carole Moore), the University of Manitoba (Carolynne Presser), and the University of Guelph (Mike Ridley), who recommended that:

"The career path for academic librarians and archivists should parallel that for the faculty." (p.5)

And furthermore:

"That librarians be recognized as academic partners with the faculty, with appropriately defined career paths and compensation, and that they be extended the rights and obligations consistent with the notion of academic status that is now the norm throughout universities in Canada."

While the first collective agreement achieved inclusion of "academic status", the related recommendations have clearly gone unanswered. Librarians and archivists at Western rank 91st out of 113 research libraries in North America when it comes to salaries and benefits — last among Canadian universities. Yet another panel of external reviewers is completing their

report right now, having heard concerns expressed by librarians and archivists throughout the system that their work continues to be devalued and their professionalism threatened by UWO's Administration.

UWOFA-LA tabled its Compensation and Benefits proposals in August. Having received an insulting offer of a 1% scale increase and little else in the Employer's opening counter-proposal on October 19, it is little wonder that plans for a looming strike deadline of Oct. 31 are now underway in earnest.

Since May 4, the two sides have met more than 30 times, and yet the most contentious articles remain unresolved: Annual Report and Review; Reassignment; Responsibilities; Workload; and Promotion and Continuing Appointment, among others. The fundamental obstacle is the Employer's insistence on generic job descriptions, which provide it the "flexibility" to move Members from one position to another, without regard to a member's education or expertise. The proposal's inclusion of professional development and retraining is worthless because if the Employer deems Members did not "succeed" in making the transition, they face severance,

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without any regard to years of service. Despite a disproportionate emphasis on Academic Activities (i.e., Research), for most Members this amounts to only 10% of their responsibilities, with no start-up grants and a minimal Professional Expense Reimbursement, which remains unchanged from the current \$900. To add insult to injury, the request for a Health Care Spending Account, similar to the Faculty HCSA, has been folded into PER, so you can take your pick: career development or health care? Once again, the Employer says our “gain” is “flexibility”.

The Employer chooses to embrace the terms “fair and equitable” only to maintain “equality” with the status quo of employees even worse off: for example, “it wouldn’t be fair and equitable to provide Librarians and Archivists with access to priority spaces in the UWO Child Care Centre, because UWO Employee Groups other than Faculty don’t have such access”, even though about a

quarter of the current child care spaces are taken up by members of the general public, not other UWO employees. So much for Western’s “family friendly” workplace.

Unfortunately, it seems that only hard-line pressure can move this Employer: filing for Conciliation (August); an 88% strike mandate from Members (September); a No Board report (October) and now a strike deadline: November 2.

Other OCUFA and CAUT member associations are flabbergasted by UWO Administration’s refusal to allow the amalgamation of UWOFA’s two bargaining units; they are incredulous when they see the resistance we are experiencing with language issues; and they are in disbelief when they observe the disjunction between consistently high professional performance, as evidenced by more than one survey, and by far the lowest salary among all comparator

institutions. Add to this the new President’s disdainful remarks at his first meeting of the UWO Senate (coincidentally on the day of UWOFA-LA’s strike vote), about not needing to enter a library in his brave new world, and it is hardly surprising that the youngest union on campus is standing firmly behind its negotiating team in the face of a historic strike.

While Western may lay claim to the “best student experience at a research intensive university”, thanks in no small way to the continued professionalism of its highly skilled cohort of librarians & archivists, it is hardly a “best” experience to be a member of that particular employee group. In L/A circles, Western is seen as the revolving door: a way to start your career, but to move on if you are able, because better pay and career advancement awaits you on almost any other campus in Canada.

President’s Report

Now is the time for solidarity

By Regna Darnell

Since our last Faculty Times, the librarians and archivists negotiations have been in the foreground. Although the process has been fraught with obstacles and inflexibilities, I am sanguine about the future of UWOFA in terms of the solidarity of its bargaining units.

Despite the Employer’s unwillingness to amalgamate faculty and LA bargaining units (as they are amalgamated at almost all comparator institutions), it is increasingly clear that the issues of professionalism and creating a workplace climate of respect apply across full-time, part-time and

limited-term faculty and librarians and archivists. We are united in our resolve and in our vision of a fair and equitable relationship to the Employer.

Faculty are becoming more aware of both the nature of the work done by librarians and

archivists and of their professional stature alongside other categories of faculty. The establishment of this professionalism has been the primary goal of previous UWOFA-LA contracts. Ironically, we would not have come to know each other so much better had the Employer been more reasonable, and we have not given up on amalgamation.

It is time to test our enhanced solidarity. The LA bargaining unit has only 55 members. This means that, if a strike is declared on Nov. 2nd, our colleagues will need active support from faculty in maintaining their picket lines, explaining the issues to students and colleagues, and seeking publicity for the job action. I urge

all faculty to get involved. We are required to meet our classes but are otherwise free to support our striking colleagues.

I also want to remind faculty colleagues that we have begun work on contract goals for our own negotiations that will begin in the spring. Many of the same issues will return to that bargaining table. Precedents set in the UWOFA-LA negotiations can be expected to recur. Solidarity now is an investment in the future for all UWOFA members.

These are not easy times. Nonetheless, I believe Western is in better shape than most Ontario universities. Our defined contribution pension plan spares the

Employer considerable expense incurred elsewhere. Investment losses have begun to recover, although there has been no apparent rethinking of the university's aggressive investment policy. It is crucial that we do not allow the Employer to solve the purported financial crisis on the backs of the faculty and librarians/archivists. We are the strength of the university's reputation and the basis of its future. I believe that active Employer support for our teaching, research, and service is to the advantage of all parties. Let's make it clear that the university is a community and that we stand together in strengthening and supporting it.

Life at the top in tough times

Our new President's contract

By Mike Carroll, Past President of UWOFA

In May, fifty-five staff positions were eliminated. Departmental budgets throughout the university have been slashed. And likely, we're told, we'll continue to face tough times for the next few years. Why? Because of the global financial meltdown and consequent loss of the investment income that we had built into our operating budget. It's all sadly straightforward, *but* if we all act responsibly, lower our expectations, and pull together for the good of the university, well then, by golly, we will survive.

And after all, haven't our senior administrators led the way with a pay freeze? Of course, a cynic might argue that freezing a high salary, while commendable, is not much of a hardship (especially if that salary is excessive to begin with). Still, there is no denying that it's a step in the right direction and appreciated. On the other hand, in this year of financial crisis we also had a new President come on board and that presented the Board of Governors – and the new President himself – with the opportunity to demonstrate they

take their own rhetoric seriously. Did they meet the challenge? Well, not quite.

UWOFA has now been given a copy of Amit Chakma's contract. Let's start with his base salary: \$440,000 for the first year. For comparison, the Sunshine list gives Paul Davenport's salary for 2008 as \$384,375. That's close to a 15% increase over one year. Should presidential salaries increase this much, and be this high in absolute dollars, in tough times? Apparently so. But there's

more. The President's contract also says that he will be eligible for an annual cash bonus of up to 10% of base salary based on "achievements with respect to performance objectives developed by the Board in consultation with Dr. Chakma." So let's get this straight: if he performs *well* and meets his goals, he gets (up to) \$484,000; if he doesn't meet those goals, he has to settle for a measly \$440,000. Life at the top in tough times is tough indeed.

But as always, it's the perks that have been ladled onto the senior administrator salary mix that are at least as interesting as the enormous salaries themselves.

First, there's the how-hard-can-it-get clause: at the end of his term of office, Amit Chakma will have the option of continuing at UWO as a Full Professor with tenure, with a salary equal to 80% of his base final salary as President.

Second, there are the various retirement cushions. First, he's enrolled in the standard UWO Pension Plan and will be covered by the University's Supplemental Pension arrangement. He'll also get a Special Executive Pension valued at \$8,830 times the total number of years he's served as President (though there are some restrictions here). Incidentally, Executive Pension payments "shall be made out of University's general funds." My reading: the

value of these payments will be impervious to stock market fluctuations, unlike the pension amounts associated with ordinary faculty and librarians/archivists.

Third, the university will provide a variety of miscellaneous perks (miscellaneous, at least, relative to the size of his salary). These include a leased non-luxury vehicle and residence at Gibbons

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Lodge rent-free (both taxable benefits); an annual research/professional allowance of \$15,000; up to \$25,000 in moving expenses; and up to \$3,500 a year for financial planning or legal advice. On the last item: given the river of money flowing into the President's bank account, I certainly see the need for financial planning – but is this something the University should pay for? What do you imagine the reaction would be if faculty, librarians/archivists, or staff asked for a similar benefit?

And then there's travel. The President will be reimbursed for travel related to his responsibilities as President *and* will be entitled to choose business class for travel outside Canada and the continental U.S. While it may not seem unreasonable for a university President to fly business class, it still would have been a nice gesture – given the sacrifices that others are being asked to make – to have the university pay economy class and have the President dip into his own salary if he wanted to upgrade. Interestingly, the contract also says "expenses of Dr. Chakma's spouse when accompanying him on business travel will be subject to the prior approval of the Chair of the Board" – which I think means that her costs, which would presumably include business class when he flies business class, might be covered as well. Now, family values are important, but really, here too, is a perk like this justified in times like these? Would we accept spousal subsidies like this in the case of faculty or librarians/archivists? (If "yes," then by all means pass that suggestion on to the L/A negotiating team and the Faculty Contract Committee!)

In the end, times are tough but obviously tougher for some members of the University Community than for others. As I said, the Board and the new President were handed a perfect opportunity both to take their

Who is the Master Puppeteer?

By Bernd Frohmann, Associate Professor
Faculty of Information and Media Studies

As readers of this issue likely know, the UWOFA Board unanimously passed the following motions in an emergency meeting on 23 October 2009:

- ◆ That the UWOFA Board authorizes the UWOFA-LA Negotiating Team to set a strike deadline of November 2, 2009.
- ◆ That the UWOFA Board authorizes the UWOFA-LA Strike Committee to draft a strike-picket schedule that includes a minimum 20-hour work week in order for members to receive strike pay.
- ◆ That the UWOFA Board authorizes the UWOFA-LA Strike Committee to acquire the necessary supplies (portapotties; picket signs, etc) required for strike action.
- ◆ That the UWOFA Board authorizes the relocation of the UWOFA office and staff to the strike headquarters.

To understand how we got here and what it means for the forthcoming negotiations between the employer and the faculty bargaining unit, it's helpful to recall some important lessons of negotiations of the first collective agreement for librarians and archivists.

Everyone involved in the negotiation of a first collective agreement has much to learn. The members of the contract committee quickly learned how to translate their bargaining unit's frustrations and needs into bargaining goals, and how to write specific clauses of specific articles expressing those goals. The librarian and archivist members of the negotiating team learned how to defend those goals and articles at the bargaining table, facing some experienced negotiators from the administration side. Members of the librarian and archivist bargaining unit, those fifty-five individuals whose quality of work, the value and respect for that work and its fair remuneration were on the line, quickly learned, through the formal channels of UWOFA meetings and through informal workplace channels, not only what was at stake but the power they had gained to take control of their working conditions. And just recently these same members exercised great courage and resolve in the face of the employer's intransigence in negotiations of their second collective agreement. They unanimously authorized their negotiating team to seek conciliation, and they supported a strike vote by an 88% majority. To face so many pressures all at once is quite daunting, and as someone who teaches in the Master of

Library and Information Science program, I can attest our librarian and archivist colleagues didn't learn in graduate school how to struggle collectively to control their work.

It's my belief that a deep knowledge of and commitment to the professional nature of academic librarianship and archival science lies at the heart of this learning, courage, and resolve. UWO's librarians and archivists have once again been ranked as best in Canada, sharing first place with McGill and the University of Toronto (see the article by Aniko Varpalotai in this issue). They know how essential their work is to teaching and research, the two pillars of the university's academic and scholarly purpose.

A lot of ink has been spilt on the meaning of professionalism, but it comes down to this: control over one's work. Librarians and archivists must have the academic freedom to independently pursue their individual and collective professional work. UWO librarians and archivists unionized for the same fundamental reason faculty members did: their professionalism was threatened because the employer sought to increase control over their work. For faculty members, the final straw was PACFED, a career micro-

managing proposal sufficiently repugnant that faculty members organized to gain that essential tool of control of work: the right to strike. For the librarians and archivists, the fundamental issue in their first negotiations was control of hiring, performance appraisal, discipline, working conditions, and of course, compensation and benefits.

At first, the administration side in these first negotiations could not or did not want to understand academic librarianship and archivist professionalism. They too had a lot to learn. They brought to the table a conception of librarians and archivists as clerks. This refusal to see librarians and archivists as academic colleagues of tenured or tenure-track faculty members is deeply ingrained in the managerial mind. As Kathleen Fraser noted at the UWOFA General Meeting of 23 October 2009, we see the same principle at work in negotiations of faculty agreements, where faculty members with limited-duties and limited-term appointments are disrespected by the employer and where degrading levels of control over their work are presented as a matter of managerial right.

At some point in those first negotiations the tide turned, and proposals were tabled that moved sufficiently in the direction of recognition of the librarians' and archivists' professionalism to reach

a settlement. Yet this time, we see a clawing back of this recognition and a return to a clerical conception of librarians and archivists, in the form of the proposals described by Aniko Varpalotai elsewhere in this issue. Faculty members must support the librarians and archivists in their struggle, for at least two reasons. First and most importantly, the employer's proposals are degrading to our librarian and archivist colleagues; these proposals are a direct attack on their professionalism because they are an attack on the gains they had made over control of their work. Second, we should be prepared to expect the same principle — deprofessionalization — to drive the employer's negotiations of the faculty collective agreement.

What accounts for this change? Michele Parkin, the administration's chief negotiator, has earned the respect of UWOFA negotiators for two reasons: she can negotiate pragmatically, not just from managerial ideology (the latter is usually quite well represented on their team), and she can negotiate creatively, capable of presenting new ideas that can help break up disputes and clear logjams. She knows how to get a contract, and she knows her job is to get one. But this isn't happening in these negotiations. Why? What accounts for the inflexibility, the intransigence? Who are we negotiating with? Who is the master puppeteer?

Candidates readily come to mind. The first is the Board of Governors, that incarnation of outmoded fiscal policies that prevented the university from dealing effectively, fairly, and with respect for employees in its response to "the economic downturn". Are the librarians and archivists negotiating with the Board? Is the Board situated in a zone so hermetically sealed from the effects of a strike that it would precipitate one?

The second is the new President. Not much union experience there. To read or listen to his speeches is to be transported to a space of flows of invisible forces. Environments are changing, communities are broadening, just about everything is diversifying, "can-do" attitudes get things done, lots of globalizing going on. It's challenging, for sure, to speak for all this, to channel it into a rather small piece of real estate in a mid-sized southwestern Ontario city. But although tokens of respect for self-directed academic and scholarly work are few and far between in the stratospheric zones of invisible flows, this rhetoric isn't yet very worrisome because we've heard it all before and on its own it's pretty harmless. As for the President's Senate declaration that libraries aren't really very important to him (because of all that new stuff happening these days), shock and astonishment are surely appropriate responses, especially in that venue. But

perhaps it just shows inexperience and poor judgment. It's likely that some cynics might even look forward to a repeat performance of foot-in-the-mouth calisthenics. I do have some worries about how the President's confessed strong belief in "institutional differentiation for the sake of attaining global excellence" will play out because it points in the direction of increased control over the work of at least the inevitable have-not section of UWO's academic and scholarly workers. But I think it's too early to determine whether that belief is sufficiently strong for a new President to precipitate a

major strike in the first full semester of his tenure. We expect new CEOs to rattle cages and at least talk about shaking things up, but a strike in the first five months? Is that how Presidents get pay raises?

I have a different worry. What if there isn't a coherent and stable agent pulling the strings? What if what's happening here is something that often happens when large corporations install a new President? Fissures appear, cracks open, things get unstable, chains of command get broken, only to be reconfigured once the dust

settles. Perhaps cages have been rattled and things have been shaken up beyond the control of either the Board of Governors or the President. In that situation, who knows who's in charge? There's lots of disembodied managerial zealotry flying about the offices of the senior administration of this university, just looking for a warm and comfortable place to settle. That's the danger I'm worried about. And the questions remain: who are we bargaining with now, and who will we be bargaining with in 2010? Who is the master puppeteer?

Research excellence at Western

By Regna Darnell, UWOFA President

Western's reputation among research-intensive universities in Canada has been on the upswing during my 20 years at this institution. Research at Western has been and continues to be something in which faculty can take legitimate pride. It is disturbing, therefore, to find the present financial climate enabling a rhetoric of muted expectations.

Our President, Amit Chakma, unsurprisingly counsels financial prudence in all aspects of university work – presumably from the faculty point of view encompassing research, teaching and service (public and professional if not internal and administrative). In the Gazette of 25 August 2009, he was quoted as saying: "Occasionally we'll be able to

achieve excellence in select areas through sheer luck or through generous philanthropic contributions, but we'll not have a systemic capacity to support excellence."

I want to dispute the definition of both research and excellence implicit in this statement (which Dr. Chakma acknowledges may fail to capture his full position). Across the disciplines, research is a process of inquiry that depends on expertise, engagement with the cutting edge of scholarship in specialized disciplines or interdisciplines. "Luck" doesn't have much to do with being prepared to take advantage of research opportunities and pursue tantalizingly promising lines of innovative research, whether in the labora-

tory or the library. "Serendipity" perhaps, but this is not a passive falling into significant results that automatically entail kudos and financial support.

I'm a social scientist, though I hold a cross-appointment in the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry. So I envision research productivity in terms of scholarly communication. One aspires to be in ongoing contact and synergy with a network of peers who are defining and redefining the parameters of knowledge. In addition to our personal research careers, we convey to our students and to the general public the quality of our commitment and the excitement of watching scientific paradigms emerge and coalesce. There is no Nobel Prize

in many of the disciplines Western faculty practice. But there is certainly a peer process of knowing what others are up to and judging its potential significance. Budget is secondary to having something significant to spend research money on.

Disciplines are quite different, of course, in the funding requirements of excellent research. There is no question that grants have to be larger to support labs, research teams and processing of complex data. Our academic mandate, however, requires the building of capacity through the training of younger scholars. Our undergraduates should, at the very least, realize that their professors are contributing to the research they read about and that hypotheses are being posed and tested constantly. I took geology for my undergraduate science requirement in 1962-63 with some disgruntlement at its then-seeming irrelevance to my anthropology and medieval English literature majors. But I still remember the last lecture in which the professor shared with

us, his eyes glowing with prophetic enthusiasm, something he thought might be going to be important though it was far from proven. It was plate tectonics. I learned more about how science works from that than anything else in the course.

Canada is privileged in the structure of its Tri-Council funding to include multi-year support for graduate and post-doctoral students as well as faculty members. This allows us to build the scientific networks and communities that are the basis of sustained excellence in research. Despite the failure of successive governments to privilege research and development to the extent that we within the universities would wish, there has been a commitment in principle to the value of ideas, even though many of them lack direct practical implications. We are enjoined by our public funding, of course, to note the potential utility of our work. Social science projects, for example, talk more about policy implications than they used to.

Nonetheless, we continue to seek, at least some of us some of the time, knowledge for its own sake. Theory and application are related in discipline-specific ways to be sure, but the underlying values are not exclusively utilitarian.

Philanthropic contributions are indeed important and should be sought where the potential exists. The generosity of those who support university research is, for me, at least as much a question of vision as of money. We need buildings and equipment, but we also need people and resources for them to train their students, attend conferences to disseminate their results, and attract the best and brightest of our generation to Western, whether as students, guest lecturers or permanent faculty.

Faculty are the engine that makes this vision work. In order to be effective in creating an environment of research excellence, we need to know that our research is supported by the institution in which we work, that

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