



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF INFORMATION

Siobhan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Faculty of Information
University of Toronto

Cheryl Giblon, Chair MPL Board
c/o Catherine Biss, Chief Executive Officer and Secretary – Treasurer
Administration Centre & Support Services
6031 Highway 7,
Markham,
ON
L3P 3A7

March 25, 2011

Re: A letter of deep appreciation and support

Dear Ms. Giblon,

I am writing to express the deep appreciation I have for the important and ground-breaking work your management team is doing within the field of public librarianship as both an essential public service and a professional practice.

I am a professor at the Faculty of Information (formerly referred to as the “library school”) and my research interests include the future of the public library within today’s information economy. I am motivated by the concern that unless public librarians and public library trustees engage in *calculated* risks and strike out in new directions, the future of this historic institution is far from assured. But I digress. I also teach the public libraries course in the Masters of Information program. An important component of that course is the professional panels and guests I invite into the class to speak with the students on various topics. On March 7, three of your senior managers: Moe Hosseini-Ara, Diane Macklin, and Andrea Cecchetto came in to speak on the topic of libraries, community, and economic development in general, and library innovation in particular. The afternoon was a great success and to-date, students are still telling me how inspiring they found your team and how they would love to work in the environment described by the speakers.

Perhaps the best way to capture the impact of that afternoon and the extent of my appreciation is to provide you with the text from the thank-you email I sent to Moe, Diane and Andrea after their presentation. Ms. Giblon, I commend you, the MPL board, and your CEO, Catherine Biss, on the tremendous work you are doing at MPL. I also want to say thank you for giving your staff the opportunity to come and

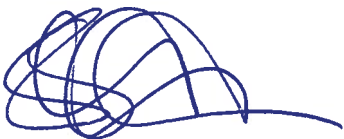
speak at the University about the Markham experience. Meeting successful professionals engaged in charting a new course for the public library is one of the best educational opportunities we can provide a new generation of librarians

Dear Moe, Diane, and Andrea

Thank you so much for what was without a doubt the best presentation we have had in this class to date and perhaps for the reasons I am about to tell you, the best guest presentation I have had in any of my classes (and I have taught a lot of classes and hosted a lot of guests). In no particular order: (1) the combination of individual energies, enthusiasms, passions, and knowledge combined with the obvious collegiality, respect and pleasure that you take in each other was inspiring. A number of students have emailed me telling me that their dream is to work in an environment like yours-- great colleagues and great ideas. (2) Your ideas and projects are truly cutting edge, they challenge assumptions and demand answers to hard questions—"now why do we do that?" Basically you haul out all the deeply entrenched ideas and expose them to the light and this clearly leads to some pretty profound, if not uncomfortable, revelations. We have been talking about the library and issues of social exclusion and its status as (traditionally anyway) a middle-class institution and your discussion about rules and signs and place opened onto all of these questions in a way that demands a personal engagement (and self examination) of one's own unexamined beliefs, assumptions and blind spots. (3) You are a living example of what can be frustratingly vague concepts like "innovation," and "entrepreneurship", and "creativity." (4) You have convinced me, and given me an energy infusion and optimism about the future of the public library. You have also challenged me to design courses that will give our graduates the outlook/philosophy, skills, and the courage to take on the establishment "the man" as they used to say in the 1960's-- as you are doing! A million thanks for coming down and visiting. I wish you every success with C3. Finally, I look forward to connecting with you again.

Ms. Giblon, congratulations on an awesome staff doing amazing things!

Sincerely



Siobhan Stevenson