

Memorandum

Re: Recommendation for the CAUT Academic Librarians' and Archivists' Distinguished Service Award

Date: October 19, 2020

To: CAUT Council

From: Kate Cushon, Chair

The Academic Librarians' and Archivists' Distinguished Service Award was established in 1994 to recognize outstanding contributions by academic librarians and archivists and other academic staff to the advancement of the status and/or working conditions of academic librarians and archivists at Canadian universities and colleges. The CAUT Librarians' and Archivists' Committee is pleased to recommend that this award be given to Harriet Sonne De Torrens of the University of Toronto.

Harriet Sonne De Torrens' career exemplifies persistent activism and advocacy, and she has made a truly impressive number of contributions to the advancement of the status and working conditions of academic librarians at the local, regional, and national level. She has demonstrated an unflagging commitment to the profession of academic librarianship, even earning an award for Academic Librarianship from the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) after only four years of professional practice in a continuing appointment.

Harriet began organizing and advocating for academic librarians at the University of Toronto through her service on the UTFA Librarians Committee in 2007. Her talents, dedication, and leadership were immediately apparent and respected, and continue to be a touchstone for the University of Toronto librarian community. In 2010 she was nominated and accepted the position as the Chair of the UTFA Librarians Committee. Recognized as for her skill in promoting the message that librarians are full partners with academic faculty in the pursuit of the University's academic mission – and reflecting that message in her own career – her colleagues requested that she serve the maximum number of consecutive years allowed within this position: 6 years. Subsequently, Harriet accepted a two-year term as the Member-at-Large on the UTFA Executive Committee from 2016-2018, and has since resumed the position of the Chair of the UTFA Librarians Committee until June 2022.

From 2010-present she has organized over 30 events and consultations, as well as developing and disseminating over 10 surveys to canvass librarians about their questions, thoughts, ideas, and concerns regarding the University of Toronto *Policies for Librarians*. During this time, she built

awareness that the document had not been substantially updated since its establishment in 1978. By aggregating and disseminating the community's feedback (collected both in-person and online) she was able to impress upon the U of T community the significance of the *Policies for Librarians* and the deficiencies within the *Policies*, while simultaneously cultivating solidarity amongst the ~160 librarians across U of T's 3 campuses.

Nationally, Harriet has distinguished herself through strong, consistent commitment to her colleagues through involvement in CAUT and CAPAL. Although her service to CAUT has not been in elected positions, she has made excellent use of CAUT's national listserv and recent Librarians' and Archivists' Conference to share important messages to colleagues across the country.

Beyond service work, Harriet has engaged in scholarly activities that directly support and consolidate her activism, reaching a broader audience than is possible through involvement in local, provincial, national, or even international organizations. She has authored articles and chapters on the subjects of academic freedom for academic librarians, academic status, professional autonomy, the importance of engaging in scholarly activities, the history of academic librarian activism at the University of Toronto, and why advocacy is so critical.

It is rare to find such engaged, consistent, and successful activism. Harriet Sonne de Torrens is dedicated to her profession and colleagues in all the ways that the CAUT Academic Librarians' and Archivists' Distinguished Service Award is meant to encourage, highlight, and reward.