Motion

To: Faculty Council, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto

Motion: Statement in support of librarian Dale Askey, and McMaster University

Moved by: Wendy Newman

Seconded by: Nalini Singh

Date: February 27, 2013

Whereas:

–The “impartial evaluation of information quality is one of the key contributions of professional librarians” (Canadian Library Association); and

–The academic freedom of librarians is essential to the mission of academic libraries and universities;

The Faculty Council of the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto, adds its voice to those of the Canadian Library Association, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, and many others, in support of Librarian Dale Askey and McMaster University, in their defense of the libel suit against them by Edwin Mellen Press; and, urges Edwin Mellen Press to end its lawsuit.

Background:

This highly unusual case has been widely publicized. One recent article in Inside Higher Ed (http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/02/08/academic-press-sues-librarian-raising-issues-academic-freedom) notes that, in 2010, while he was a librarian with the status of tenured associate professor at Kansas State University, Askey had written in his personal blog (since removed) an assessment of Edwin Mellen Press as a publisher, in the course of his work: this included the assessment of materials for purchase. EMP took issue with the critical comments and has sued Askey personally, as well as McMaster University – where he has worked as a librarian since 2011 – as “vicariously liable”. McMaster University has posted a public statement in support of the intellectual freedom of the academic community and intellectual freedom “as a social good” at http://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/worth-mentioning/mcmasters-commitment-to-academic-freedom/. Many individuals and groups within the academic and library communities have issued statements similar to the text of this motion; only two have been noted above as examples.