

MUFA

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McMASTER UNIVERSITY
FACULTY ASSOCIATION

February 11, 2013

Dear Colleagues:

The following article appeared in the February 8 issue of *Inside Higher Ed* regarding a MUFA member, Dale Askey, who is an academic librarian.

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/02/08/academic-press-sues-librarian-raising-issues-academic-freedom>.

McMaster also posted a note about this on the Daily News on February 8.

<http://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/worth-mentioning/mcmasters-commitment-to-academic-freedom/>

On February 9 and 11, the following articles appeared in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and the *Hamilton Spectator* respectively.

<http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/edwin-mellen-press-sues-university-librarian-for-libel/42193>

<http://www.thespec.com/news/local/article/884586--mac-librarian-shocked-by-3-5m-blogging-lawsuit>

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This case involves two law suits both by Edwin Mellen Press. One, in the name of the company, is against McMaster and Dale. The second, in the name of the owner of the company, is only against Dale. According to the February 9 *Chronicle* article "the publisher alleges that Mr. Askey accused the press of 'accepting second-class authors' and urged 'university libraries not to buy the Press's titles because they are of poor quality and poor scholarship.'" Edwin Mellen Press also charges that because McMaster University employs Mr. Askey and did not require him to remove the blog post or the comments, then the university 'adopted the defamatory statements as their own.'"

MUFA only became aware of these lawsuits within the last week. Our Executive Director told me that MUFA has never dealt with such a case. Hence, my first move was to ask Dale to talk with Jim Turk, the Executive Director of CAUT, given that our national organization has more experience with such cases. Dale spoke with Jim and has also had several conversations with Patrick Deane. I spoke with Jim on Friday and have a meeting with Patrick Deane today.

CAUT and the MUFA Executive agree that this case represents a serious threat to the freedom of academic librarians to voice their professional judgement and to academic freedom more generally. We believe that McMaster University should offer Dale Askey all necessary support, including financial assistance, in dealing with this threat to him, to our institution and to the wider academic community.

Martin Dooley
President, MUFA