

MAFA NEWSLETTER

Mount Allison Faculty Association

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November 2022

GENERAL MEETING REMINDER

Please plan to attend MAFA's Fall General Meeting at 3 pm on Friday, December 9th. You will soon receive via email an agenda, minutes and other documents. These will also be available on the Teams channel. Hope to see you then!



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's an interesting time for post-secondary labour negotiations in the region. On November 11, after nearly a month on strike, members of CUPE 3912 at Dalhousie (precarious academic workers) voted in favor of a new four-year contract. The agreement includes a 23% pay raise for new part-time academic instructors; a 23% hourly pay raise for teaching assistants; a 44.5% raise for demonstrators and markers; and full payment to members for their Fall 2022 contracts (<https://cupe.ca/new-contract-ratified-academic-workers-dalhousie-university>).

This was an impressive victory. Ellie Weise, a member of the negotiating committee, commented: “we made large gains in our wages and progress towards our workplace protection goals. The gains in our wages for this single collective agreement is the same as the gains we have made in the last 15 years. This jump is entirely the product of the collective mobilisation and striking efforts. However, this deal is not perfect. We are still underpaid compared to our U15 counterparts, there are contract concerns like duty creep between TAs, Demonstrators and Markers that have not been fully addressed. I consider this new collective agreement an important first step to build upon in the next few years using other tools of the union until our next bargaining cycle in 2024” (<https://springmag.ca/lessons-from-the-dal-strike>).

Meanwhile, the UPEI faculty association has been without a contract since July 1 and negotiations are now in conciliation. Among the most important issues are faculty complement and the compensation of contract instructors. As the association explains, “Over the last decade, UPEI has expanded in scope and in enrolment. At the same time, resources for existing programs and support for academic staff has declined. Despite our university growing significantly, within the last decade the number of full-time faculty has remained virtually unchanged.” The university’s “over-reliance on contract academic staff (sessional and term instructors) has led to the exploitation of individuals who teach – in some cases for decades at a time – for poverty-level wages with no job security, pension, or benefits.” 53% of the faculty in 2020-21 were either in sessional or term

positions (<https://www.upeifa.ca/2022/03/16/week-2-upei-by-the-numbers/>).

MAFA's current Collective Agreement will not expire until July 1, 2024, but in the next academic year we will need to prepare for bargaining. It will be instructive to watch what happens at UPEI and elsewhere in the meantime.

I'm also pleased to remind you of our on-line General Meeting and in-person End-of-Term Party on Friday, December 9th. The meeting will be at 3 pm on Teams, and please join us in person at the University Club at 4:30 pm for the party. There will be food and drink and HEPA-filtered air.

Karen Bamford
President



GRIEVANCE REPORT

Summary

MAFA has worked on ten grievances since the April 2021 AGM:

- 1 individual grievance has been filed and is in progress.
- 5 individual grievances (on related issues) have been filed and referred to arbitration.
- 1 individual grievance was settled without prejudice to the employer's position at step 1 (on same issue as above).
- 1 union grievance has been withdrawn without prejudice to MAFA's position.
- 1 individual grievance was settled without prejudice to the employer's position at step 1.
- 1 union grievance was settled and withdrawn.

Detail

1) Change to work duties without consultation (FT Articles 4 and 12); employer mandating 3 days per week on-campus attendance for member to accomplish technologically mediated work. One individual grievance (2022-11) has been filed in October 2022. A step 2 meeting will be held in November 2022. This grievance is **ongoing**.

2) Employer refusal to pay start-up payments for new correspondence courses (PT Articles 4, 30, and 32). Six individual grievances (2022-02, -03, -04, -05, -06, and -10) were filed in June and July 2022. MAFA **settled** one grievance (2022-04) at step 1. MAFA moved five grievances to **arbitration**.

The employer sectioned off individual grievance 2022-02 from the other four grievances that were moved to arbitration: as a result, there will be two arbitrations. For 2022-02, Dr. Robin Vose (STU) will serve as MAFA's side-person and Terrance LeBlanc (HR, U de Moncton) will serve for the employer. Both sides have agreed on arbitrator Trisha Perry and arbitration dates have been set for March 21–22, 2023.

For individual grievances 2022-03, -05, -06, and -10, Dr. Robin Vose will serve as MAFA's side-person and Ryan Johnston (UNB University General Counsel) will serve for the employer. Both sides have agreed on arbitrator Gus Richardson and arbitration dates have been set for June 29–30, 2023. These five grievances are **ongoing**.

3) Inconsistency with equity forms in hiring processes (FT Articles 4, 11, and 16). One union grievance (2022-09) was filed in June 2022. Following a step 2 meeting, in which both parties acknowledged the need for an updated and unified process regarding equity forms A and B, the employer reaffirmed its commitment to employment equity and agreed that the union should receive copies of Form A. This grievance is **resolved**.

4) Changes to teaching duties without consultation; discrimination and bullying (FT Articles 4, 11, 12, and 18). An individual grievance (2022-07) was filed in June 2022. Following a step 1 meeting with a Dean held in June, the **employer accepted** one of MAFA's proposed remedies. This grievance is **resolved**.

5) *Employer not copying MAFA on appointment letters (PT Article 16)*. A union grievance (2022-08) was filed in June 2022. Following a step 2 meeting, the employer accepted MAFA's remedy. In response, MAFA accepted the employer's **settlement** offer and withdrew the grievance.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Pearce
Grievance Officer

FOUR MEMBERS RECEIVE RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY STIPENDS

MAFA is pleased to advise members of the four part-time members who have won Research and Creative Activity Stipends for the 2022-23 year. As usual they represent the range of research and creative activity here at Mount Allison.

Holly Abbandonato (Geography and Environment) received a stipend for her project entitled "Carbon stocks and Loss on Ignition (LOI): Are we misestimating blue carbon in salt marshes?"

Elizabeth Jewett (Canadian Studies) was successful for her proposal entitled "The Next Round: Layered Landscapes of the Maritimes' Golf Courses."

Emily Keenlyside (Fine Arts) has received a stipend for "Collaboration, Competency Building, and Critical Museum Praxis: Mobilizing Professional Learning Between Museum Scholars and Practitioners."

Finally, Alisa Nguyen (Geography and Environment) received a research stipend for her topic "The International Political Economy of Lobster."

The stipend, currently valued at \$7340, is salary support for research and creative activity. Under Article 29.02 of the part-time collective agreement, applications submitted by part-time members are considered by the Senate Research and Creative Activity Committee. Applications are due August 31st for each annual competition.

This is the seventh year in which four stipends have been awarded. "It is fitting that we can pass on the news of these research and creative activity stipends so soon after Fair Employment Week" says MAFA President Karen Bamford. "These stipends help part-time members undertake and be compensated for their research and creative activity, and they highlight the important roles they play both within and outside the classroom, lab and studio." At the same time, the "awarding" of these stipends highlights an important difference in the conditions of employment for part-time members compared to those for full-time members.

Whereas all full-time members are compensated for their research and creative activity, only a subset of part-time members receive compensation for this aspect of their work and those who do need to apply and have their scholarly projects approved.

"While MAFA has been successful in negotiating some support for the research and creative activities of part-time members," Karen Bamford says, "it is clear that we are still a far way away from achieving working conditions that are fair and equitable for all members of our academic staff. Working towards such improvements will continue to be a priority in the upcoming round of collective bargaining."

JOINT LIAISON REPORT

Since September, the following issues have been discussed at Joint Liaison at the two meetings that have been held.

-Music Conservatory. Applied acoustic treatments (panels) are being installed. They are apparently beige. We continue to apply pressure for continued work on making the Music Conservatory a safe work environment.

-Health protection mandates. We followed up on the possibility of the Employer purchasing and lending CO2 detectors.

-We again addressed the need for an increase in mileage and meal allowances given the rising costs of food and fuel. We're told that Financial Services is looking into the matter.

-The VOIP (voice over internet protocol) and MPA (multi-point authentication) Systems. We explored the topic of data security and possibility of subsidies for members who use their cellphones in lieu of office landlines. We also talked about the MPA (multi-point authentication) system, which has thus far been implemented in Financial Services and Computing Services.

-Long-term disability coverage. We requested and received an update on the situation concerning a member whose coverage appeared to be reduced after moving to a full-time academic contract position from a permanent, middle-management position. We have been assured that the member will not lose LTD coverage should they need it.

-Black Student Advisor position in Student Affairs. We articulated a member's concern about the lag in hiring someone for this position.

-Summer office cleaning. We sought clarity about communicating when and if office cleaning would be conducted in the Summer term.

-Correspondence courses. We brought up payment models and schedules for Spring/Summer correspondence courses. We also inquired about the plans moving forward with respect to offering new SDL/correspondence courses in the Fall and Winter semesters.

-The cameras that have been installed on campus are currently not being monitored nor are they recording. A policy to record and save data for 30 days is still under review. We suggested signage as a means of disclosure and deterrence.

-We asked whether there was an official employer policy on in-person attendance for academic staff, such as a minimum of three on-campus days per week.

-New self-serve software to pay students. There have been challenges with the new software and we proposed that more training be offered to those who supervise student employees. The potential privacy concerns for students were also brought up.

-Full-time Clause 5.13 b) on informing the union

about sick leaves of one month or more. We discussed the importance of honouring this clause consistently, in the context of a sick leave situation.

-Director of People and Culture. We asked about how far a term like "culture" was meant to extend the jurisdiction of the Human Resources department.

-We requested that MAFA receive email addresses of those who have signed appointment letters but have yet to receive a Mount Allison email account, a right to which we are entitled based on existing case law.

-We asked about the criteria for referring members on sick leave to Manulife for "sick leave management."

-CRC Feedback. We inquired as to the timeline for unsuccessful Canada Research Chair candidates receiving the feedback from the internal assessment committee that they were promised.

Members wanting more information on the role of the Joint Liaison Committee should refer to Article 6 of either collective agreement.

Toni Roberts and Geordie Miller



REPORT ON THE CAUT LIBRARIANS' AND ARCHIVISTS' CONFERENCE

The theme of this conference was “Collective Resistance,” and the theme was interpreted in a wide number of presentations. The keynote address was given by Alison Macrina, Executive Director of the Library Freedom Project, a US-based library advocacy organisation focused on privacy and intellectual freedom. The talk was framed from an American perspective with discussion of intimidation tactics, political sabotage, and book banning taking place in US public and school libraries and resources the Library Freedom Project uses to fight back.

While the context of the discussion seemed removed from Canadian universities at times, there were still disturbing parallels with the rise in anti-intellectualism and devaluing of expert or scientific opinion which is seen in our own province and across the country. Particularly for academic libraries, advocacy surrounding user privacy and resisting the continuing commodification of academic information was an important discussion with advocacy tools like the Library Vendor Privacy Scorecard raising alarms for some of the largest academic publishers and platforms using user data for commercial purposes.

Towards the goal of de-commercializing and democratizing access to information, the panel on open scholarship was top of mind for me going into the conference and drove home the important work that librarians are doing to push back against the neo-liberalization of education & access to scholarly information. I encourage my faculty colleagues to reach out to your librarians to discuss ways of resisting commercial publishing practices through strategies like green open access and institutional repositories and to discuss supports for the creation, adoption, and adaptation of open education resources as textbooks prices continue to skyrocket and move further away from permanent ownership.

Plenary discussions took place surrounding leveraging collective agreements and collegial governance. These discussions were important to

highlight the wide-ranging status and conditions of academic librarians and archivists across the country. This includes from full or parallel status to teaching faculty all the way to exclusion from academic unions entirely, like many colleagues in Quebec. Hearing the diversity of experiences between associations and institutions caused me to reflect on the excellent protections for librarians which MAFA has negotiated over the years.

Despite this, I encourage discussions among the membership about addressing greater workload protections for librarians and ensuring adequate professional staffing levels in the Libraries & Archives, issues which go hand in hand. A pattern of attrition in academic staffing in the library and an erosion of tenure-track positions in favour of term appointments is nearing a crisis point and is causing increasing burnout and demoralization among our members, despite calls for minimum staffing levels through mechanisms like academic unit reviews. Dwindling academic staffing in the library also impacts our ability to fully engage with collegial governance structures to advocate for the resources needed in the library. Major projects are underway including a massive collections review & reconfiguration and preparations for the R.P. Bell Library Renovation, meaning that our already stretched members are continuing to be asked to do more with less. This is at a time where the work we do will have transformative impacts on the future library which will serve faculty and students for the next 50 years or more.



Attending the conference has driven home for me the fact that despite being a small constituency within

MAFA—like other faculty associations—librarians and archivists make important contributions to our associations but also the larger academic health of our institutions. This is perhaps best illustrated through UMFA President and fellow librarian Orvie Dingwall, who has led the University of Manitoba faculty through numerous and tumultuous job actions and negotiations. The phrase “small but mighty” was used frequently during the conference and is a sentiment that many conference delegates walked away with, including me.

I would like to conclude by thanking MAFA for supporting my attendance as an in-person delegate at the conference in Ottawa and CAUT for holding what was for me could be a gold standard for a hybrid-format, bilingual conference. As someone who is still quite new to being a member of an association representing academic staff, attending this conference was truly an eye-opening experience and one which was of immense value for me.

Gavin Goodwin
Creative Arts Librarian



MAFA 2022-2023 EXECUTIVE

- Karen Bamford, President (English)**
- Geordie Miller, Vice-President (English)**
- Matthew Betti, Treasurer (Math and CS)**
- Maritza Fariña, Past President (Modern Languages and Literatures)**
- Melissa Grey, Part-time Officer (Biology)**
- Josh Kurek, Membership and Advocacy Officer (Geography and Environment)**
- San Patten, Equity Officer (Sociology)**
- Linda Pearse, Grievance Officer (Music)**
- Toni Roberts, Collective Bargaining (Sociology)**
- Geoff Martin, Executive Director and Professional Officer**

COMING EVENTS

All MAFA members are encouraged to attend these coming events:

2022

Friday, December 9, 3 pm **MAFA General Membership Meeting** (on Teams)

Friday, 9 December 4:30pm University Club, **End-of-Term Party**