

Mt A. Memorial Library update 3
Sent by email 2 March 2011.

Fellow Allisonians and friends of Mount Allison,

With the help of many of you, opposition to the planned destruction of the Mount Allison Memorial Library continues to grow. Over 1200 people have now signed the online petition to save this important heritage building and cenotaph.

Still, VP David Stewart, President Campbell and the rest of the Mount Allison Administration continue to forge ahead with plans to demolish this magnificent structure. During a recent address to an alumni group in London, England, President Campbell refused to discuss the issue, saying only that it was "not the time or place". He used the same tactic to avoid commenting on the issue while entertaining retired faculty at his home in Sackville last December. It has become very apparent that the administration has no intention of defending this plan but rather deals with it by avoidance. It is not surprising that the administration finds it difficult to defend such an immoral and unnecessary act as the wilful destruction of a War Memorial.

VP David Stewart has stated repeatedly that the building suffers from structural fatigue. Retired Head of the Engineering Department, Prof. Ron Boorne, has written often and convincingly that it would be physically impossible for a static structure like Memorial Library to suffer from structural fatigue. As a result, Stewart recently stopped using this term and now says that the Memorial Library is "rife with structural issues", but he continues to refuse to provide any written or physical supporting evidence. Prof. Boorne and others say the building shows no visible signs of deterioration and attest to its solid structure.

Stewart also refuses to provide any evidence to support his claim that it would cost an extra \$5 million to save or incorporate the library into the new Arts Centre. The University of British Columbia recently renovated many buildings in worse condition than Memorial Library and found that it costs less money than new construction, not more as Stewart would have us believe. To refurbish an old Auditorium and convert it to a world class concert and opera hall at UBC cost \$10 million less than a new building.

<http://www.vancouver.sun.com/technology/Retrofits+give+life+landmarks/4154422/story.html>.

A few years ago, John K. F. Irving of the Commercial Properties Branch of the New Brunswick Irving Empire gave a talk in the Wu Auditorium on the Mt A campus (large Physics Auditorium for those of us with long memories!) about the heritage buildings which the Irvings renovated, modernized and restored in Saint John, NB. Those buildings became ultra-modern while retaining their heritage status and value. Irving pencils are known to be very sharp but he reported that the final costs were comparable to new construction.

Why then, does David Stewart and the rest of the Mt A Administration expect us to believe that it would cost \$5 million more on the Mt A campus to repurpose the Memorial Library as part of the new Arts Centre?

Prof. Boorne has asked repeatedly to be shown evidence that the building has structural problems, to see the beams in question and to review the cost quotations. He recently received a letter, signed by President Campbell, once again refusing his pleas and stating: "This letter will be the last response that you will receive from the university on this matter." Surely, if what Mr. Stewart says is true, it would be to the Administration's advantage to provide the evidence!

Mt A. wishes to be seen as having an environmentally friendly campus. It is well known that "the most environmentally friendly building is the one that is already built" (Carl Elefante). It is not apparent that the negative environmental impact of destroying such a substantial structure as Memorial Library has been properly addressed by Mr. Stewart. The physical act of demolishing the Memorial Library could cancel any earned carbon credits for all the Mt A campus for years to come.

Efforts to save this important building continue. If you support these efforts and have not done so, please join over 1200 people who are telling the Administration that the destruction of Memorial Library would be bad for Mount Allison. Write to Bruce McCubbin, Chairman of the Board of Regents at bruce.mccubbin@moosehead.ca and President Campbell at rcampbell@mta.ca and sign the online petition at: <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/2/save-the-memorial-library/> .

Opposing the destruction of the Memorial Library does not in any way imply that any of us oppose the construction of the facilities so badly needed by the fine and performing arts departments. A new Arts Centre could be wonderful if properly constructed to meet the requirements of the academic departments.

Please forward this message or pass the information on to other Allisonians and Friends of Mt A so that they too can have the opportunity to make their concerns known. For more information see: <http://www.eastmarket.com/smash/> .

Sincerely,
Bruce

Bruce Coates ('69)
email: eoateeug@nbn.net.nb.ca