

# Library students still fighting cuts

by Jillian Millar

It's late on a Friday evening at the Maritime Museum. Harbour lights reflect off the water and through the large picture window that runs the length of the room. Well-dressed people mill about, talking to each other and occasionally glancing out at the harbour. On a long table beside the window, finger sandwiches and different types of cheese are laid out. A tall man stands in the corner, pouring glasses of wine.

People relax and pull off their suit jackets. Then they pull on T-shirts.

They're not just slipping into something a little more comfortable.

The shirts bear the logo of the Dalhousie School of Library and Information Studies, or SLIS. A large red 'Cancelled' stamp covers the logo, and the back of the shirt says, "No Librarians, No Libraries, Know Nothing."

The people wearing them work in the information business, and have gathered from across the province to attend the Atlantic Provinces Library

Association conference, 'Charting the Course Together.'

Alison Hopkins, a SLIS student, is

*Cuts will devastate the professional field.*

here selling the protest shirts because her program needs support from these

people in order to survive the cuts Dalhousie President Howard Clark proposed in September. Although cuts to the high-profile programs of music and theatre were immediately protested, Hopkins says it takes longer for people to notice the threat to the unobtrusive area of library science.

"Everyone thinks libraries are kind of boring, kind of dull," she says. There aren't as many students in the library science program to protest the cuts, Hopkins says, so they needed to alert the widespread alumni.

"It takes a little while to get the attention up, and to get them wearing the T-shirts, and talking about it enough to start sending in letter," she says.

So students made the protest part of their education, and designed shirts in a marketing class. Hopkins, acting as their client, chose the final design for the shirt.

"Other ideas were buttons, posters, petitions, brochures," she says. "All of those things have been done."

Hopkins has no problem selling the shirts. People who buy them put them on right away.

Marion Pape, the provincial librarian, wears hers. She says professionals have a variety of reasons to support the SLIS program.

"I feel that the library school is an essential service," Pape says. "The impact on the Atlantic services library organizations is absolutely staggering."

Other librarians have written letters expressing concern about the loss of trained librarians, who they say will serve as guides at the beginning on information age. Many concepts, such as on-line data searches, are so complex that students must be trained to think in a completely different way.

But Pape says cuts will devastate the professional field in a more subtle way, because SLIS is such an instrumental force in developing access routes to information.

Alison Hopkins is pleased with the results at the end of the night. SLIS shirts are visible throughout the room, and many people leave wearing them. By afternoon the next day, Hopkins will have sold all the shirts she has, and taken orders for more.

"People have been very generous," she says. "There's been a lot of alumni asking if they can donate money to the school, to help fight."

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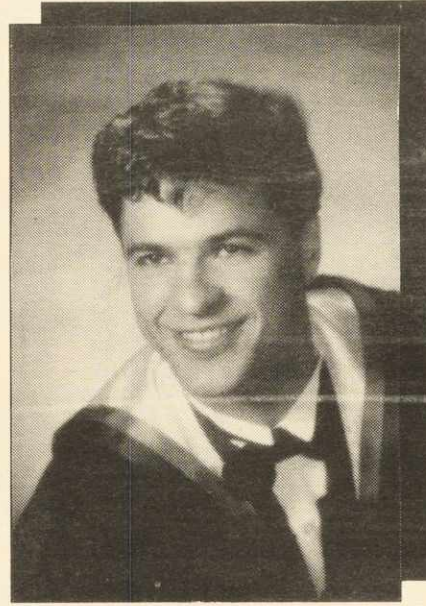


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