

Cynthia A. Romanowski

# First-time faculty librarian, second-year experience

## Continuing the tenure process

In my essay entitled “First-time faculty, first-year experience: Overcoming tenure fears” in the December 2015 issue of *C&RL News*,<sup>1</sup> I mentioned that I skipped a year in the tenure process due to my start date and have only been a faculty librarian since January 2015. I recently ended my second year and turned in my third-year portfolio. As I embark on my fourth-year portfolio, I still have concerns with needing to continuously show progress within the areas of teaching/primary duties, research/creative activity, and service throughout the tenure process.

When my portfolio moves to the university level in year four, I am also concerned about how nonlibrary faculty will assess it. Throughout my years of working in academic libraries, I have heard stories that some teaching faculty do not consider library faculty members as “equals.” Thankfully, this has not been the story at my current institution, but the notion is still in the back of my mind.

### Teaching/primary duties

Teaching in a classroom on a semester basis is what nonlibrary faculty typically know and understand. However, bibliographic instruction and workshops in a library are instruction, as well. As I prepare to conduct workshops, the following questions come to mind: 1) Will it be viewed on the same level as more traditional faculty instruction? and 2) How will other valuable duties I perform

be viewed, as they do not have direct contact with students?

As the technical services librarian, I view my department as the “heart of the library.” Like a human heart, you cannot see it as it is not in view, but you know it is there, pumping data into the catalog that disseminates vital information needed for the other library departments to function. Without it, the information does not go in and the library can no longer function as the resource center it strives to be. It furthers this valuable role in making sure that this information is accessible, accurate, and up-to-date for library users. Our students and staff members rely on our department without even knowing we are there or what we do. However, currently, external forces threaten this vital library organ and greatly impact its primary function.

Illinois has been operating without a state budget for more than a year, and we rely on some of this budget money for operations. With the small amount of money received, the allocated portion for our library is even smaller. Therefore, by necessity, the primary function of acquiring and cataloging shifts to database maintenance.

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As department head, I am finding ways to take advantage of this opportunity by identifying cleanup projects to ensure the integrity of our database.

One example of this is working with archives by cataloging older theses as well as enhancing existing theses' bibliographic records for better accessibility to aid graduate students. Aside from a shift in priorities, technical services staff have additional scheduled public services desk time to compensate for a hiring freeze.

### Research/creative activity

With these projects and additional desk time, it was difficult to focus on the "faculty" side of my job requirements at the beginning of this semester, as my supervisory duties took precedence.

Whether resolving personnel issues, providing additional training, or creating end of fiscal year reports, I found myself pulled away from my designated research time to attend to these important issues. The seven-letter word *publish*, that instilled such fear in me in my first year, still does intimidate me, but on a different level. This new level requires my work to be scrutinized by pee reviewers or juried selections in order to complete the research/creative activity requirement for my fourth- through sixth-year portfolio.

Through it all, I am thinking of ways to maximize the opportunity to combine my supervisory duties with my research duties. One way to do this, is to design a case study out of the budget crisis. Also, I am using the additional reference desk time to design potential workshops based on the questions I receive.

Aside from the writing portion of the "faculty" side, conference attendance is also affected by the budget crisis because less budget money means less reimbursement money. With each call for proposal and committee service email, I think about how much the organization can afford along with how much I can afford on my own.

These considerations cause me to be more selective in terms of which conferences I submit proposals for and which national

committees I strive to be on. I want to experience all conferences and partake in as many committees to be more impactful in the library community. In order to do this, I take note of these emails for possible future attendance or service.

### Service

My service area is coming along the best. I have managed to get appointed to various university-level committees as well as state and national committees. I continue to show progress in my responsibilities on these committees, and thoroughly enjoy the opportunities they provide. My university committees allow me to know my university on a curriculum level, and my state and national committees allow me to be more involved in my library profession. As I have previously mentioned, I may have to give up serving on some of them due to lack of funding, to focus on my research/creative activities.

With the new challenges that an external force has presented, my colleagues continue to be very encouraging and supportive. I am very grateful to all whom I serve with on the various committees, both locally and nationally. They continue to teach me so much, and I value the networking opportunities presented and hope to be able to collaborate with some of them in the future.

### Conclusion

My advice to anyone presented with challenges out of their control is to find ways to capitalize on the new opportunities that this challenge can present. For me, I am looking for teaching opportunities in the form of workshops, ways to combine my supervisory duties with research duties, and picking service committees that help me grow professionally. You have to rethink priorities and turn lemons into lemonade, as the saying goes in order to maintain the tenure course.

### Note

1. Cynthia A. Romanowski, "First-time faculty, first year experience, *C&RL News* 76, no. 11 (December 2015): 590–91. 