

Joint statement on faculty status of college and university librarians

Revision approved by the ACRL Board of Directors, October 2012

The statement that follows was prepared by the Joint Committee on College Library Problems, a national committee representing the Association of College and Research Libraries, the Association of American Colleges (now the Association of American Colleges and Universities), and the American Association of University Professors. The statement was endorsed by the board and annual meeting of the Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association, in 1972. It was reaffirmed by the ACRL board in June 2001 and 2007. It was adopted by the Council of the American Association of University Professors in April 1973 and endorsed by the Fifty-ninth Annual Meeting. Additional revisions were made by a subcommittee of the ACRL along with representatives of the AAUP in June 2012 and approved by the ACRL Board of Directors in October 2012.

As the primary means through which students and faculty gain access to the storehouse of organized knowledge, the college and university library performs a unique and indispensable function in the educational process. This function will grow in importance as students assume greater responsibility for their own intellectual and social development. Indeed, all members of the academic community are likely to become increasingly dependent on skilled professional guidance in the acquisition and use of library resources as the forms and numbers of these resources multiply, scholarly materials appear in more languages, bibliographical systems become more complicated, and library technology grows increasingly sophisticated. The librarian who provides such guidance plays a major role in the learning process.

The character and quality of an institution of higher learning are shaped in large measure by the nature and accessibility of its library resources as well as the expertise and availability of its librarians. Consequently, all members of the faculty should take an active interest in the operation and development of the library. Because the scope and character of library resources should be taken into account in such important academic decisions as curricular planning and faculty appointments, librarians should have a voice in the development of the institution's educational policy.

Librarians perform a multifaceted role within the academy. It includes not only teaching credit courses but also providing access to information, whether by individual and group instruction, selecting and purchasing resources, digitizing collections, or organizing information. In all of these areas, librarians impart knowledge and skills to students and faculty members both formally and informally and advise and assist faculty members in their scholarly pursuits. They are involved in the research function and conduct research in their own professional interests and in the discharge of their duties. Their scholarly research contributes to the advancement of knowledge valuable to their discipline and institution.

In addition, librarians serve and contribute to university governance through their service on campus-wide committees. They also enhance the reputation of the institution by engaging in meaningful service and outreach to their profession and local communities.

Where the role of college and university librarians, as described in the preceding paragraphs, requires them to function essentially

as part of the faculty, this functional identity should be recognized by granting of faculty status. Neither administrative responsibilities nor professional degrees, titles, or skills, per se, qualify members of the academic community for faculty status. The function of the librarian as participant in the processes of teaching, research, and service is the essential criterion of faculty status.

College and university librarians share the professional concerns of faculty members. Academic freedom is indispensable to librarians in their roles as teachers and researchers. Critically, they are trustees of knowledge with the responsibility of ensuring the intellectual freedom of the academic community through the availability of information and ideas, no matter how controversial, so that teachers may freely teach and students may freely learn. Moreover, as members of the academic community, librarians should have latitude in the exercise of their professional judgment within the library, a share in shaping policy within the institution, and adequate opportunities for professional development and appropriate reward.

Faculty status entails for librarians the same rights and responsibilities as for other members of the faculty. They should have corresponding entitlement to rank, promotion, tenure, compensation, leaves, and research funds.

Librarians should be offered the opportunity to have either academic-year appointments with salary and benefits commensurate with those of other faculty members or calendar-year appointments with additional compensation for summer work as is customary for faculty members who take on summer teaching assignments. As with faculty members in other academic departments on campus, librarians should be responsible for the development of their promotion and tenure criteria. Because of the special teaching role of librarians, criteria and standards may differ from traditional classroom faculty, but they must be comparable in rigor and content. Promotion and tenure guidelines should be approved by whatever faculty body is responsible for the establishment of promotion and tenure pro-

cedures and policy. Faculty librarians should go through the same process of evaluation as other faculty members.¹

On some campuses, adequate procedures for extending faculty status to librarians have already been established. These procedures vary from campus to campus because of institutional differences. In the development of such procedures, it is essential that the general faculty or its delegated agent determine the specific steps by which any professional position is to be accorded faculty rank and status. In any case, academic positions that are to be accorded faculty rank and status should be approved by the senate or the faculty at large before submission to the president and to the governing board for approval.

With respect to library governance, it is to be presumed that the governing board, the administrative officers, the library faculty, and representatives of the general faculty will share in the determination of library policies that affect the general interests of the institution and its educational program. In matters of internal governance, the library will operate like other academic units with respect to decisions relating to appointments, promotions, tenure, and conditions of service.²

Notes

1. "1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure," <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/1940statement.htm>; "1958 Statement on Procedural Standards in Faculty Dismissal Proceedings," <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/statementon+proceduralstandardsinfaculty+dismissal+proceedings.htm>; "Statement of Principles on Leaves of Absence" (1972), 54–55; in AAUP, *Policy Documents and Reports*, 10th ed. (Washington, D.C.: AAUP, 2006).

2. American Council on Education, AAUP, and Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, "Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities" (1966), <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/governancestatement.htm>, in AAUP, *Policy Documents and Reports*. ♪