

Ratio of Professional to Clerical Staff

Mr. Voigt is assistant librarian, University of California, Berkeley.

IN HIS DISCUSSION of the financial problems of university libraries in COLLEGE AND RESEARCH LIBRARIES¹ Dr. Archie L. McNeal advocates a ratio of two non-professional employees to each professional. In presenting data on this proposal he makes several miscalculations which should be corrected.

He suggests that Columbia might point the way for other institutions since there the ratio is greater than two to one. Harvard, Illinois and California (Berkeley) are admonished to mend their ways. In drawing this conclusion he fails to note that in the Columbia figures, taken, as are all his statistics, from the ACRL tabulations in COLLEGE AND RESEARCH LIBRARIES,² student assistance is not separated from other non-professional help. (McNeal is not fully to blame for this since the reference to the footnote which should have accompanied the Columbia data was omitted in this year's statistics although it does appear the previous year.) Thus, Columbia's ratio, as reported, is not comparable to the other institutions cited. As is shown below, the ratios for Columbia and California are not far apart when calculated on the same basis.

In a table which follows in McNeal's article he "... lists some of the university libraries currently operating with approximately the staff relationship proposed. . . ."

¹ McNeal, Archie L., "Financial Problems of University Libraries," COLLEGE AND RESEARCH LIBRARIES, 15:407, October, 1954.

² "College and University Library Statistics," COLLEGE AND RESEARCH LIBRARIES, 15:71, January, 1954.

TABLE

Ratio of Non-Professional to Professional Staff

	Excluding Student Assistance		Including Student Assistance ¹	
	Rank	Ratio	Rank	Ratio
Massachusetts	1	2.25 to 1	1	3.00 to 1
Miami	2	1.82 to 1	7	2.53 to 1
Cincinnati	3	1.81 to 1	8	2.48 to 1
Pennsylvania	4	1.78 to 1	16	2.09 to 1
Wayne	5	1.73 to 1	2	2.94 to 1
Brown	6	1.64 to 1	17	2.06 to 1
Tennessee	6	1.64 to 1	19	2.60 to 1
South Carolina	8	1.63 to 1	5	2.61 to 1
Fordham	9	1.62 to 1	9	2.40 to 1
Iowa	10	1.55 to 1	6	2.60 to 1
Utah	11	1.45 to 1	3	2.90 to 1
Iowa State	12	1.42 to 1	18	2.03 to 1
Harvard	13	1.41 to 1	26	1.62 to 1
California (Berkeley)	14	1.40 to 1	14	2.13 to 1
Princeton	14	1.40 to 1	27	1.55 to 1
Missouri	16	1.38 to 1	21	1.94 to 1
Virginia	17	1.36 to 1	20	1.97 to 1
St. Louis	18	1.33 to 1	25	1.85 to 1
Yale	19	1.32 to 1	—	— ²
Ohio State	20	1.31 to 1	23	1.87 to 1
Purdue	21	1.30 to 1	12	2.20 to 1
Washington (Seattle)	22	1.29 to 1	13	2.19 to 1
Indiana	23	1.25 to 1	23	1.87 to 1
Florida	24	1.22 to 1	11	2.25 to 1
California (L.A.)	25	1.18 to 1	15	2.12 to 1
Cornell	26	.91 to 1	28	1.31 to 1
Illinois	27	.77 to 1	29	1.24 to 1
Texas	28	.66 to 1	21	1.94 to 1
Minnesota	29	.49 to 1	30	.98 to 1
Wisconsin	30	.31 to 1	31	.81 to 1
NYU	—	— ³	4	2.70 to 1
Columbia	—	— ³	10	2.37 to 1

¹ Student assistance in full-time equivalent determined approximately by dividing reported hours by 2000.

² No student assistance reported in 1953/54.

³ Student assistance not reported separately.

Of those listed, only one, a library with a full-time staff of thirteen, maintains the two to one ratio recommended and five have a lower ratio of non-professional to professional staff than do Harvard and California

(Berkeley), previously cited as needing improvement. New York University, included in the table, is also not comparable since student assistance is included in its report as part of non-professional help.

Since the amount of student help used by university libraries varies considerably, it would seem logical to include it as part of total non-professional staff before calculating the ratios. This is advocated in the ALA's *Classification and Pay Plans for Libraries and Institutions of Higher Education*.³

There is also the question of the appropriateness of the ratio that was suggested. The ALA plan proposes the opposite ratio for the two classes of employees, suggesting that non-professional staff, including stu-

dents, should equal 40-60% of the professional staff. Neither McNeal nor the ALA plan justify their proposals nor do they indicate the reasoning which leads to the establishment of these contradictory proposals. Most libraries are attempting to increase the ratio of non-professional to professional staff by eliminating as far as possible the clerical aspects of professional positions. Whether a categorical ratio to fit all institutions can be established, even if student assistance is included, seems doubtful. At least there is little standardization at this time as is shown in the following table which includes all of the libraries mentioned by McNeal plus institutions reporting total staff, including students, of over 100 full-time equivalents. If student help is included in the calculation, a majority of large university libraries maintain the two to one ratio.

³ American Library Association. Board on Salaries, Staff and Tenure. *Classification and Pay Plans for Libraries in Institutions of Higher Education*. 2d ed., v. 3, Universities. Chicago, 1947. p. xxiv.

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