

Faculty Perceptions of Librarians at Albion College: Status, Role, Contribution, and Contacts

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The authors survey faculty perceptions of the status, role, and contribution of librarians at Albion College, a small, selective liberal arts college in Michigan. The extent and nature of the contacts between the two groups are examined and the views of librarians held by a number of faculty cohorts isolated. The methodology used in the study is explained, the results compared with prior surveys conducted at the university level, and suggestions for further study offered. The authors suggest that faculty perceptions of librarians influence their status, the degree of isolation of the library within the organization, how well or poorly it is funded, and how intensively and successfully its resources are exploited. They conclude that if librarians are to achieve a status appropriate to their contribution, they will need to better define their role and communicate it more clearly to their clientele.



Within the academic structure, librarians play an ambiguous role. On the one hand, they perform administrative functions in a largely hierarchical organization, an occupation that aligns them in the eyes of some observers with deans, provosts, and other administrators.¹ On the other hand, librarians devote an increasingly high proportion of their time to community service, research, and teaching and often organize themselves in a collegial manner. They tend to identify with the faculty, although they are not usually members of traditional academic departments and, particularly at the college level, do not always hold academic rank or tenure-track positions.

In addition, much of the work carried on

in academic libraries tends to be invisible, even to informed users, and much of what is visible—circulation and interlibrary loan, for example—is clerical in nature and only infrequently performed by librarians. In fact, the aspects of an academic librarian's job that are intrinsically most valuable to the institution and most rewarding to the individual—teaching, research, and collection development, for example—are not always clearly understood by their clientele. Faculty may be unaware that these less visible functions most clearly define the librarian's role.

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

Given the ambiguity and invisibility that accompany the librarians' role, the perceptions faculty hold of them assume

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interest and importance. The authors suggest that how librarians are viewed by this primary user group influences not only their status, but also their relative degree of isolation from the centers of campus power, how well the library is funded, and how intensively and successfully its resources are exploited.

Several questions were formulated at the beginning of this investigation around which information concerning faculty perceptions of librarians at the college level might usefully be gathered: Do college faculty view librarians as their academic equals? Do they distinguish between librarians and support staff? and Do frequent faculty library users rank college librarians higher than do infrequent library users?

JUSTIFICATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Unlike the earlier university-based reports that we cite, the Albion study surveys college faculty. We wished to learn how their perceptions of librarians compare with those of their university-level counterparts previously reported in the literature. The Albion study also isolates the responses of more faculty cohorts who hold differing attitudes toward librarians than do the earlier reports.

Like all professionals, librarians have a responsibility to reexamine continuously the tenets of their field. Replication of studies such as this is an important safeguard against the self-congratulatory turn that survey research can take when it is conducted *en famille*. Through replication generalizable responses are separated from those that are merely artifacts of the local culture. We suggest that further studies be conducted, not only of faculty perceptions, but also of the views of librarians held by administrators and students, and that the depth of the analysis be increased.^{2,3}

THE LITERATURE

In ranking occupations according to status, the average citizen of the United States rates librarians at 55 on a scale of 0 to 100, placing them behind school teach-

ers, nurses and veterinarians, but ahead of social workers and funeral directors. In contrast, college professors receive a rating of 78, placing them behind physicians but ahead of dentists and bankers. By way of comparison, judges and lawyers rank 76, while farm laborers, maids and servants rank 18.⁴

Since 1980, several researchers have attempted to determine how well or poorly librarians are viewed by faculty at the university level. M. Kathy Cook surveyed 386 members of the faculty at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, in 1980. She concludes that "overall the perceptions indicated that librarians are contributing members of the University, they help in teaching, they should be conducting research and they should be given faculty rank and status for their efforts."⁵

"... 'a majority of faculty view librarians as professionals and . . . a majority of those surveyed felt that librarians should be granted faculty status.' "

John Budd and Patricia Coutant replicated Cook's study in 1981 at Southeastern Louisiana University. A limited sample of 137 usable responses corroborates many of the earlier findings. The authors conclude that "a majority of faculty view librarians as professionals and a majority of those surveyed felt that librarians should be granted faculty status."⁶

Conflicting results were obtained by Gaby Divay, Ada Ducas and Nicole Michaud-Oystryk from 633 faculty respondents at the University of Manitoba in 1985. They found that "overwhelmingly, librarians were seen as 'professionals' with a 'service' function," and note that "activities such as research, teaching and management received low ratings." They conclude that there exists "a low acceptance of librarians as full-fledged academic colleagues in the University of Manitoba setting."⁷

ALBION COLLEGE

Albion College is a selective, private liberal-arts college located in Albion, Michigan. The Stockwell-Mudd Libraries serve approximately 1,600 students, 130 full- and part-time faculty, and a small number of local community borrowers. The collections include approximately 380,000 volumes. There are five professional library positions, including that of the director, and seven and one-half non-professional positions. In 1983, the faculty voted to withdraw faculty status from the minority of librarians who held it at that time. All librarians, however, retain the right to vote in faculty assemblies and may serve on those academic committees whose membership is not limited to tenured faculty.

METHODOLOGY

The instrument used in this survey is composed of twenty questions (see appendix A). The majority of these are taken from the Cook and the Divay, Ducas and Michaud-Oystryk surveys.^{8,9} However, our questionnaire also includes original questions, inappropriate to the university level, that are of interest to college librarians. For example, respondents are asked whether they feel faculty or librarians should have primary responsibility for selecting several categories of books, how many Albion College librarians they can identify by name, and if they have contact with librarians at both college and private social functions. The questionnaire was pretested with five faculty members, pre-test subjects were interviewed and, after slight revisions in wording, the instrument was accepted.

Two weeks before the questionnaire was distributed, a letter announcing and describing the project was sent to all faculty. This letter explained the reasons for the survey and assured potential respondents that it would take no more than ten minutes to complete. It emphasized that the results would be reported in aggregate format and the respondents' confidentiality respected.

The entire population of 109 full-time Albion faculty not on sabbatical was included in the survey. Eighty-five usable

questionnaires were received for a return rate of 80 percent. Several groups of faculty who hold particular views of librarians were isolated. Among the cohorts identified in this fashion are professors, associate professors, and assistant professors/instructors; teaching- and publication-oriented faculty; and frequent and infrequent library users; they are referred to as such throughout this report.

Of the respondents, 37% are from the sciences, 34% from the humanities, 19% from the social sciences, and 10% from the fine arts. Thirty-nine percent hold the rank of assistant professor or instructor, 20% associate professor, and 42% professor. Sixty-seven percent are frequent library users who report almost daily or weekly use. The remaining 33% are infrequent library users who use the library monthly or less frequently. Forty percent of the frequent library users are full professors, 18% associate professors, and 42% assistant professors/instructors. Of the infrequent library users, 44% hold the rank of professor, 22% that of associate professor, and 33% that of assistant professor/instructor.

More than half—56%—of the infrequent library users are from the sciences; nearly half—43%—of the frequent library users are from the humanities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Who is a Librarian?

The results of the Albion study confirm the commonly held impression that faculty often fail to distinguish between librarians and support staff. Of our respondents, 77% could not identify by name all five Albion College librarians although the campus community is quite small and the nature of professional employment clearly outlined on the questionnaire. Further, 40% identified as librarians one or more members of the support staff. These were most often staff with whom they have frequent contact—circulation, interlibrary loan, and periodicals department employees, for example.

Significant concern flows from these misperceptions. If faculty mistake tasks that are essentially clerical as professional, they will not be encouraged to support

higher status or improved salaries for librarians.

Since the 1950s, a profound change in the work load of academic libraries has occurred. Librarians have increased their teaching, research, community service, administrative, planning, and information management activities and passed along to support staff—now sometimes called paraprofessionals—many of the traditional archival and operational tasks of acquiring, organizing, storing, and circulating the printed record. Allen Veaner refers to this phenomenon as the "off-loading of . . . production work onto support staff."¹⁰

In academic libraries, much of what was formerly the work of professional catalogers is no longer performed, or is performed by support staff. Since the creation of the national bibliographic networks, catalog copy supplied by a few large libraries has come to be routinely accepted by the local level, reducing significantly the need for original cataloging. In some libraries, professional positions have been transferred out of technical services entirely.

Today interlibrary loan, circulation, and reserve book tasks are rarely performed by college librarians. Reference librarians devote increasing amounts of time to computerized database searching and library instruction, and often allow routine reference questions to be answered by paraprofessionals. It is not uncommon for support staff to be regularly scheduled to work at the reference desk, once an impregnable bastion of library professionalism.

These fundamental changes in the distribution of the library work load have not been effectively communicated to faculty and other clientele, academic administrators, and personnel officers. Consequently, their perceptions of the roles of librarians and support staff alike are blurred. Such misperceptions contribute to the depressed status and salary of librarians and also create an artificially low ceiling beyond which support staff cannot advance.

Contact Increases Status

The perceptions of librarians held by the

faculty are, of course, colored by the nature and frequency of the contacts that they have with them. At Albion College library, 86% of our respondents report reference assistance contacts with librarians. The next highest area of library contact is in collection development (71%), followed by computerized literature searching (61%), library instruction and orientation (45%), and library policy issues (18%).

At the University of Manitoba, Divay, Ducas, and Michaud-Oystryk report a similar level of reference assistance contact (90%), but a lower level of contact in computerized literature searching (51%) and involvement in library policy issues (15%). Albion College faculty-librarian contacts are significantly higher on collection development issues than those of their university-level Canadian colleagues (71% vs. 47%). This difference may be explained by the generally higher level of faculty involvement in book selection at the college level and by the Albion College librarians' program of collection assessment that in the past two years has increased the number of contacts between the two groups.¹¹

Not surprisingly, frequent library users report a higher frequency of contacts with librarians in the library setting than do infrequent library users. For example, infrequent library users report no significant contact with librarians on library policy issues, although 22% of the frequent library users do report such contact (see table 1). In the other areas surveyed, frequent library users report a somewhat or a significantly higher level of contact with librarians than do infrequent library users: reference (90% vs. 74%), collection development (71% vs. 67%), computerized literature searching (64% vs. 52%), and library orientation and instruction (47% vs. 37%).

Respondents who characterize their research as publication-oriented also report significantly higher levels of contact with librarians than do teaching-oriented faculty in collection development (88% vs. 65%), computer literature searching (75% vs. 40%), and library orientation and instruction (50% vs. 30%). The other categories surveyed, reference and library policy, show no significant differences

TABLE 1
RELATION OF FACULTY LIBRARY USE TO
ATTITUDES TOWARD LIBRARIANS

	Mean Scores		T-test	P
	Infrequent Users (N = 27)	Frequent Users (N = 54)		
Librarians' involvement in education of students 1 = very substantial 5 = none	3.3	2.5	3.98	.0002
Librarians' importance in faculty research 1 = very important 5 = unimportant	3.0	2.1	3.62	.0005
Librarians deserve faculty rank and status % yes	52%	69%	1.4	.16
Librarians' role in book selection 0 = no role 25 = total control	12.2	13.3	2.44	.017
Faculty involvement in library policy issues % yes	7%	24%	2.14	.03
Faculty view of teaching as a priority for librarians % yes	28%	58%	2.51	.01

between these two groups.

Outside of the library setting, respondents report that the highest number of contacts with librarians occurs in faculty and departmental meetings (71%). This may reflect Albion College librarians' high level of attendance at faculty assemblies and the regular schedule of visits to departments made by librarians in fulfillment of their collection development and departmental liaison responsibilities.

The frequency of faculty-librarian contacts on faculty and school committees at Albion College—52%—is higher than that reported by Cook at SIU-C and by Divay, Ducas, and Michaud-Oystryk at Manitoba.

The number of social contacts between the two groups is also quite high. More than half of all respondents report contacts with librarians in college and private social settings (69% and 58%). Contacts at Albion College social functions are significantly higher than the contacts at university social functions reported by Divay, Ducas, and Michaud-Oystryk at the University of Manitoba (69% vs. 47%). This is presumed to be a function of the not insignificant difference in size between the two schools and communities.

Service

At Albion College, we find that faculty value highly many of the services librarians offer and the assistance they provide

in their teaching activities. An overwhelming 93% of our respondents find librarians useful or very useful in keeping them informed of changes in the library; 76% find that librarians keep them well informed of new publications in their field; and 74% find them useful or very useful in their teaching activities.

It is interesting to note that although faculty value highly the help librarians offer them in their own teaching activities, only 47% consider the teaching that librarians do as a high or relatively high priority. This may be an indication that librarians are perceived by faculty primarily as service providers.

Publication-oriented faculty report that librarians keep them better informed of new publications in their disciplines than do teaching-oriented faculty (83% vs. 65%); however, the teaching-oriented faculty find librarians more important to their teaching activities than do publication-oriented faculty (74% vs. 54%). Frequent library users find librarians more useful than do infrequent library users in keeping them informed of changes in the library (96% vs. 85%) and find them of more assistance in their teaching activities (84% vs. 56%).

Book Selection

The post-World War II movement away from book selection by faculty toward selection by librarians, well documented at

the university level, has not had an exact parallel in college libraries. Charles Gardner points out that the librarian is held responsible for "the growth, balance and adequacy" of college library collections, although book selection continues to be dominated by the faculty.¹² On many college campuses, a sizable portion of the book budget is allocated to departments and faculty often have a strong hand in selection and other collection development decisions.

"Experience suggests that some faculty build collections in college libraries that are similar in kind and scope to the sections of the university libraries that they used as graduate students and thus ignore or misjudge the practical value of their selections to undergraduates."

College librarians are frequently critical of this arrangement and evidence no small amount of concern over the quality of faculty book selection. The literature suggests that this concern is warranted. A number of studies demonstrate that faculty are not very successful selectors if recorded use is accepted as a criterion. For example, Hardesty studied the circulation patterns of 2,000 books selected largely by classroom faculty at DePauw University. He found that over one-third—37%—had not circulated after five years of availability.¹³ Experience suggests that some faculty build collections in college libraries that are similar in kind and scope to the sections of the university libraries that they used as graduate students and thus ignore or misjudge the practical value of their selections to undergraduates.

In a 1986 review of faculty attitudes toward book selection for undergraduate collections, Hardesty found faculty to be "curiously unable to describe at any length the characteristics of materials they selected." He concludes that "classroom faculty have not developed well-defined attitudes regarding the types of materials

that are appropriate" to undergraduate collections.¹⁴

Although these studies reinforce librarians' concerns about the quality of faculty book selections, they do not prove that librarians are better selectors. In fact, most of the charges leveled at the faculty also apply to librarians. For example, research has yet to demonstrate that librarians buy fewer books to support their personal research interests, although scattered reports do indicate that the books they select circulate more than those chosen by faculty.¹⁵

As a group, however, librarians are more articulate about their attitudes toward selection. In many libraries, they have constructed elaborate collection development policy statements that include detailed guidelines for selection, and a large body of theoretical and practical work on collection development has accumulated in the literature of librarianship.

At Albion College, faculty believe that book selection should be more their province than that of the librarians. Although 93% of the faculty feel that librarians should have primary or shared responsibility for the selection of reference books and 99% for general interest books, the reverse is true for course- and research-related books. Ninety-four percent of all respondents feel that they should have primary—not shared—responsibility for the selection of course-related books and 95% for books that treat subjects related to the respondents' research (see table 2).

Clearly, our respondents are in favor of a high level of faculty control over book selection, although frequent library users are somewhat more willing to share selection responsibilities with librarians than are infrequent library users (see table 1).

Two factors may account for some of what could be interpreted as deep-rooted faculty distrust of librarians' ability to select books. Until recently, Albion College librarians had extremely limited responsibility for book selection and a high percentage of the total book budget was allocated to departments. An informal sampling of the faculty conducted two years before the present survey was completed revealed that several members

TABLE 2
FACULTY ATTITUDES
TOWARD BOOK SELECTION
RESPONSIBILITIES (N = 83)

	Primarily Librarians	Equal Responsibility	Primarily Faculty
Reference	49%	43%	7%
General interest/Casual reading	61%	37%	1%
Interdisciplinary	11%	59%	30%
Course-related subjects	2%	4%	94%
Faculty research subjects	1%	4%	95%

were unaware that the book money available to them comes from library accounts or that librarians have authority over the orders that they submit for purchase. Further, the book budget is perceived by both groups to be inadequate. It may be that some faculty feel that to agree to librarians' sharing equitably in it would threaten their already meager departmental allocations.

Research

Research is a term that is used loosely, even in academe. In the library, checking a reference in the catalog or ferreting out a citation in a periodicals index may be considered research by some. Students, for example, come to the library to do research the night before turning in an assignment. Faculty do research to keep abreast of their field and to update the courses that they teach.

Many scholars assert, however, that real research must add to the knowledge base of a field and be directed toward publication. Even among this group differences exist. Researchers who do controlled laboratory experiments in the natural or physical sciences may not consider what is done in the field by social scientists to be serious research. No matter how one defines research, however, librarians are involved at all levels, although the depth of their involvement may vary from institution to institution and from individual to individual.

Librarians contribute research to their own field and they participate in the research of others. The latter is an increas-

ingly active involvement that contrasts sharply with the passive or reactive stance traditionally assumed by librarians toward the simple provision of information.

“. . . librarians must understand ‘the paradigmatic structure’ of several disciplines, ‘anticipate the researcher’s patterns,’ participate ‘in the analysis of data and interpretation of results,’ and ‘form partnerships [with researchers] in order to facilitate the research process.’ ”

Robert Grover and Martha Hale suggest that to fulfill successfully their role in the research of others, librarians must come to understand “the paradigmatic structure” of several disciplines, “anticipate the researcher’s patterns,” participate “in the analysis of data and interpretation of results,” and “form partnerships [with researchers] in order to facilitate the research process.”¹⁶ In short, they expect librarians to function as active nodes in the networks that faculty and other researchers erect.

A higher level of research productivity is expected of librarians in their own field today than in the past. In his survey of trends in library journal editing, Richard Johnson concludes that “librarians are being increasingly encouraged or required to write for publication.” He also finds that “the quality of manuscripts is improving, and librarians are using more sophisticated methodologies in their research.”¹⁷

Even librarians who are not bound by tenure and promotion requirements contribute significant research to the literature of librarianship. Joint librarian-faculty research projects are becoming increasingly common, a movement that is encouraged by the availability of small grants from the Council on Library Resources.

At Albion College, 64% of all respondents consider librarians to be important or very important to the conduct of their research. Thirty-three percent consider

the role of librarians in their research to be neutral or of little importance; and 4% consider librarians to be unimportant to their research.

As we expected to find, the publication-oriented faculty see librarians as more important to their research than do the teaching-oriented faculty (67% vs. 50%). An even higher number of respondents who define their research as both publication- and teaching-oriented, 69%, find librarians important or very important to its conduct.

When faculty were queried about whether they feel librarians should conduct research of their own, 85% responded positively. While many respondents qualified their answers, only one respondent replied that librarians should conduct no research at all. A majority of all respondents, 69%, feel that librarians should conduct research on both practical and scholarly topics. Four percent feel that librarians should limit their research to scholarly topics and 12% to practical topics.

Of the publication-oriented faculty, 91% feel that librarians should conduct research on either practical or research topics in librarianship or both. This figure drops to 70% for the teaching-oriented faculty. All members of the publication-oriented group feel that librarians should conduct research; however, 9% of this group feel that librarians should do so only out of personal interest.

It is clear that contact with the library and librarians affects faculty attitudes toward librarians' role in research: Frequent library users attribute a greater role to librarians than do infrequent users (see table 1).

Teaching

Rebecca Kellogg asserts that faculty and administrators view teaching as "the formal, structured imparting of knowledge gained from study within or related to one's discipline, and conveyed to students through academic course content." She doubts that "one or two-shot" library instruction sessions will ever "open the doors of membership in the professoriate."¹⁸

It is true that faculty are often unaware that librarians teach, and the majority of those who do not consider reference desk encounters or even formal library instruction to be the equivalent of what they do in the classroom. In fact, insufficient teaching is the reason most frequently cited by Albion College faculty to explain why they believe that librarians should not be granted tenure eligibility and faculty rank and status.

Nonetheless, academic librarians do more formal teaching today than librarians have done at any time in the past. This expanded teaching role has been dictated, among other things, by the enormous increase in the amount of information available, the inability of librarians to purchase all or even a representative portion of it, and the complex technological means through which it must often be retrieved.

As their need to teach has intensified, librarians have come to view the classroom as the most appropriate and useful setting. It is simply more efficient to teach thirty students at one time in a classroom than it is to teach them one at a time over the reference desk.

"Librarians teach critical evaluation of information sources and of information itself, bibliographic literacy skills that are important to success or simply getting on in an information-glutted society."

There has also been a shift away from the passive provision of information toward the active systematic teaching of access to that information. Today, library instruction librarians do more than simply orient students to the library or instruct them in the art of retrieving a sufficient number of citations for a term paper. Librarians teach critical evaluation of information sources and of information itself, bibliographic literacy skills that are important to success or simply getting on in an information-glutted society. For the most part, these are skills that are not systemati-

cally imparted to students by the classroom faculty.

Whatever the nature and extent of the teaching that is done by librarians, it is still largely unrecognized and undervalued by faculty and administrators. When Albion College faculty were asked to rank librarians' teaching, research, service, and management activities in order of importance, teaching fell at the bottom of the list despite the fact that a program of library instruction has been ongoing for a number of years. Of the seventy-eight respondents who ranked librarians' teaching as a priority, less than half—47%—ranked it high or relatively high. These results are consistent with Cook's responses that rank librarians' activities in declining order of importance as service, research, and teaching. Divay, Ducas, and Michaud-Oystryk report similar results; however, teaching is second-lowest and management lowest.

As a priority for Albion College librarians, teaching is ranked somewhat higher by faculty who identify themselves as both teaching- and publication-oriented (60%) than by primarily publication-oriented faculty (50%). Teaching-oriented faculty were least inclined to rank it high (21%). Frequent library users were significantly more likely than infrequent library users to rank teaching as a high or relatively high priority for librarians (see table 1).

Academic Equals?

The literature of librarianship is replete with accounts of librarians' long and often tortuous struggle to attain faculty status.¹⁹ Faculty status was publicly endorsed as appropriate for all academic librarians and as the profession's goal in 1972 when the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) published its *Standards for Faculty Status for College and University Librarians*.²⁰ Since the appearance of the *Standards*, ACRL's Academic Status Committee has constructed a number of guidelines, procedures, and model statements that supplement the content and reinforce the intent of the original document.²¹

Today, a relatively high percentage of academic librarians—although by no

means all—have achieved full or, more likely, partial faculty status.²² Ironically, neither librarians nor faculty appear to be comfortable with the existing situation. Emily Werrell and Laura Sullivan note "a growing sentiment that [librarians] may have been mistaken when [they] adopted faculty status so wholeheartedly in order to elevate [their] own positions."²³

Librarians who achieve faculty status often find that they obtain many of the obligations and few of the benefits. They may be required to work a twelve-month year with minimal job security and little protection of their academic freedoms at a salary that is lower than that of their classroom colleagues. They may also be evaluated for promotion and tenure on inappropriate teaching faculty criteria and, at least at the university level, be expected to fulfill publish-or-perish requirements even though they may not be eligible for sabbaticals and may not receive significant institutional support for their research.²⁴

Earlier studies show that faculties that bestow or accede to the bestowing of faculty status upon librarians do not necessarily perceive them as their equals in the educational endeavor.²⁵ The current study demonstrates that more than two-thirds of our respondents do not consider librarians to be their peers. These faculty members cite as their reasons insufficient teaching and research and inadequate educational credentials. Only 29% report that they view librarians as their academic equals, although 68% view them as professionals, and 2% as semi- or paraprofessionals. No respondents suggest that they view librarians as clerks (see table 3).

These figures parallel closely the percentages reported by Cook at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale (28%, 65%, and 7%); are lower in the first category than those reported by Budd and Coutant at Southeastern Louisiana University (38%, 60%, and 2%); and are higher than those reported by Divay, Ducas, and Michaud-Oystryk at the University of Manitoba (15%, 85%, and 6%).

When the respondents are grouped by research interest, their responses vary significantly. Of the publication-oriented faculty, only 17% view librarians as their aca-

TABLE 3

STATUS RANKING OF
LIBRARIANS BY FACULTY (N = 82)

	Percent
Academics equal with teaching faculty	29
Professionals	68
Semiprofessionals	2
Clerks	0
Total	100

ademic equals, although an overwhelming 79% consider them to be professionals. Almost twice as many teaching-oriented faculty—32%—accept librarians as their academic equals, while 68% of this group see them as professionals. Of those faculty who view their research as both teaching- and publication-oriented, the percentage of respondents who consider librarians to be their academic equals rises to 36%, with 62% viewing them as professionals. No significant differences were noted in the attitudes of professors, associate professors and assistant professors/instructors.

When we grouped our respondents by division, the faculty cohort most likely to accept librarians as academic equals was from fine arts (50%), followed by the humanities (32%) and, lastly, the social sciences (25%) and the sciences (23%). It should be noted that the Albion College Visual Arts department is studio-oriented and the M.F.A., not the Ph.D., is the terminal degree required of most members.

Of the frequent library users, 32% view librarians as academic equals and 66% as professionals. The equivalent figures for infrequent library users are 23% and 73% respectively. These data indicate that the greater their contact with librarians, the more likely teaching faculty are to accept them as academic equals (see table 3).

To the question, Should librarians be eligible for tenure? and the equivalent question concerning rank and faculty status, an identical 64% responded yes and 36% no. Teaching-oriented faculty were more likely than publication-oriented faculty (74% vs. 58%) to support tenure eligibility for librarians. No significant differences are noted between the responses of these two groups on the questions of rank and faculty status.

The authors were surprised to find that such a high percentage of respondents support granting librarians tenure eligibility and faculty rank and status. For one thing, even more of their numbers, 71%, report that they view librarians as something less than academic equals and, secondly, because of the previously noted 1983 faculty vote that withdrew faculty status from the few librarians who held it at that time.

From the librarians' perspective, it is encouraging to discover that a majority of the faculty support tenure eligibility and faculty rank and status for them. These results are consistent with those reported by Cook and by Budd and Coutant. The authors suspect, however, that an "oh sure, why not" attitude may disguise a less positive reality. How the faculty might respond in a period of financial distress may be another matter.

Most of the comments volunteered by the respondents who support tenure eligibility and faculty rank and status for librarians qualified their support. "Only if they are actively doing research," have "specific qualities," or "function as faculty," were themes that ran throughout these comments.

Of the reasons given by the one-third of our respondents who feel that librarians should not be eligible for tenure and faculty rank and status, the most frequently cited are insufficient teaching and research, followed by inadequate education. This group also volunteered numerous comments on the matter. In fact, nearly one-half of the total number of comments that we received (twenty-five of fifty-four) concern these issues. More than half of these expand upon why the respondents feel that librarians should be denied academic credentials and represent what appear to be strongly held reservations concerning librarians' qualifications.

Several respondents volunteered that academic freedom is irrelevant to librarians and conclude that they have less need than the faculty, or no need at all, for the protection that tenure affords. It is "not that crucial," suggests one respondent, because librarians are "not as vulnerable

to punishment of views." Others prefer that tenure eligibility and faculty rank and status be reserved to the head librarian or to those librarians who are somehow "deserving." It "depends upon the person," one respondent comments, adding that "some [librarians] do what faculty do for tenure, others are technicians." These responses demonstrate a disturbing lack of understanding of librarians' vulnerability and of their need for protection of academic freedoms.

Other respondents "believe that a librarian's primary function is service," simply "don't think of librarians as faculty," or find the role of the librarian to be "fundamentally different" from their own.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the Albion survey make it clear that faculty value many of the services that Albion College librarians offer; consider them to be professionals; fraternize with them in a variety of college and community settings; support tenure eligibility and faculty rank and status for them; and consider that they should conduct research. Our data demonstrate that the greater the faculty contact with the library, the higher the rank given librarians (see table 1).

As experiences common to many would suggest, we also find that Albion College faculty do not view librarians as their academic equals and often fail to distinguish between librarians and support staff. Our data make it clear that faculty harbor serious misperceptions about the role and function of librarians, underutilize and undervalue their teaching and research skills, and distrust their ability to select books. It appears Albion College faculty view librarians as professionals who provide a range of valued services upon demand but do not consider them to be central to the teaching and research mission of the college.²⁶

We believe that these attitudes and perceptions are common to college faculties and that to change them, librarians will need to communicate a clearer image of who they are and what it is they do. Otherwise, they perpetuate their isolation

from institutional decision-making councils, ensure the continued underutilization of their abilities and knowledge, impoverish both client-librarian and client-collection contacts, and hinder their own efforts to become more involved in undergraduate education.

One of the major barriers librarians face as they attempt to clarify their image is the manifest lack of consensus within the profession itself on what librarians ought to be doing. Pauline Wilson reminds us that the question of professional identity is "an age-old problem of the library field."²⁷ Today, this traditional concern is compounded by the unfolding revolution in information technology that requires a rethinking of the roles of librarians and libraries alike.

In 1985, Veaner set forth an agenda through which he suggests librarians can fulfill their potential and enhance their contributions to their institutions: quality publications in scholarly journals, involvement in academic governance and planning, participation in the work of learned societies and professional organizations, collaboration with faculty in the research process, and intensified programs of library instruction.²⁸ The authors wish to add "closer cooperation with the faculty in collection development and assessment."

Librarians also bear the burden of persistent stereotyping that characterizes them as passive gatekeepers and libraries as little more than storehouses for books. The fact that these views no longer accurately reflect reality—if, indeed, they ever did—is still far from universally recognized. The results of the Albion study remind us that librarians' clientele continue to focus upon the most visible operations of the library, the very functions that Veaner suggests deny "the fundamental academic character of the librarians' work."²⁹ Today, academic librarians may administer gatekeeper functions, but they no longer perform them. What they do in fact—whether they do it well or poorly—is intellectual and abstract and central to the process of scholarly communication.

Patricia Battin points out that librarians possess "totally new capacities for gener-

ating, storing, and providing access to scholarly information," and, she reminds us, it is librarians who gave scholars the means of control over the bibliographical records of their fields.³⁰ Today, librarians are reinventing these control mechanisms in the age of computer technology. As librarians guide the transformation of the structure of information, they reinforce their role as ally and partner of teacher and researcher in the educational enterprise.

The task before librarians today is to make the invisible visible. They must settle upon their role, perform it consistently, and communicate it unambiguously. When they do, their unique services and abilities will come to be understood and valued by their communities. Librarians may then find their eternal quest for a status appropriate to their contribution that much closer to realization.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

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2. Thomas G. English, "Administrators' Views of Library Personnel Status," *College & Research Libraries* 45:189-95 (May 1984).
3. Peter Herndon and Maurine Pastine, "Student Perceptions of Academic Librarians," *College & Research Libraries* 38:129-39 (March 1977).
4. James Allan Davis and Tom W. Smith, *General Social Surveys, 1972-1988: Cumulative Codebook*. NORC ed. (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center [dist. by Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Conn.], 1988), Appendix F: Occupational Classification Distributions, p.620, 622.
5. M. Kathy Cook, "Rank, Status and Contribution of Academic Librarians as Perceived by Teaching Faculty at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale," *College & Research Libraries* 42:214-23 (May 1981), p.221.
6. John Budd and Patricia Coutant, *Faculty Perceptions of Librarians: A Survey* (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 215 697, 1981), abstract.
7. Gaby Divay, Ada M. Ducas, and Nicole Michaud-Oystryk, "Faculty Perceptions of Librarians at the University of Manitoba," *College & Research Libraries* 48:27-35 (January 1987), p.27.
8. Cook, "Rank, Status and Contribution," Appendix A.
9. The Divay, Ducas, and Michaud-Oystryk questionnaire, not included in their published report, was graciously supplied to the authors upon request.
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13. Larry Hardesty, "Use of Library Materials at a Small Liberal Arts College," *Library Research* 3:261-82 (Fall 1981), p.266.
14. Larry Hardesty, "Book Selection for Undergraduate Libraries: A Study of Faculty Attitudes," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 12:19-25 (March 1986).
15. See, for example, G. Edward Evans, "Book Selection and Book Collection Usage in Academic Libraries," *The Library Quarterly* 40:297-308 (July 1970).
16. Robert Grover and Martha L. Hale, "The Role of the Librarian in Faculty Research," *College and Research Libraries* 49:9-15 (January 1988).
17. Richard D. Johnson, "Current Trends in Library Journal Editing," *Library Trends* 36:659-72 (Spring 1988), p.670.
18. Rebecca Kellogg, "Faculty Members and Academic Librarians: Distinctive Differences," *College & Research Libraries News* 48:602-606 (November 1987), p.605.
19. See, for example, Emily Werrell and Laura Sullivan, "Faculty Status for Academic Librarians: A Review of the Literature," *College & Research Libraries* 48:95-103 (March 1987); and Kee DeBoer and Wendy Culotta, "The Academic Librarian and Faculty Status in the 1980s: A Survey of the Literature," *College & Research Libraries* 48:215-23 (May 1987). For earlier citations, see Virgil F. Massman, *Faculty Status for Librarians* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1972). Werrell and Sullivan trace the

- antecedents of the movement toward faculty status to the 1940s and even the 1930s. They suggest that "there was convincing reasoning behind this push for faculty status . . . [Librarians] wanted to be active members of their campuses—to have a voice in academic affairs, to have the opportunity to contribute in a scholarly fashion to the academic world, and to be recognized as partners of the teaching faculty in the education of students" (p.96).
20. Association of College and Research Libraries, "Standards for Faculty Status for College and University Librarians," *College & Research Libraries News* 33:210-12 (September 1972). Nine provisions for faculty status for librarians are postulated in this document: (1) Autonomy in fulfilling professional responsibilities and self-determination, including peer review; (2) an academic form of library governance; (3) eligibility for participation in college or university governance; (4) a salary scale equivalent to that of other academic categories; (5) tenure eligibility; (6) promotion through ranks; (7) sabbatical and other research leaves; (8) access to funding for research; and (9) protection of academic freedoms.
 21. The official ACRL documents that pertain to faculty status are conveniently gathered together in Academic Status Committee, Association of College and Research Libraries, *Academic Status: Statements and Resources* (Chicago: American Library Assn., 1988).
 22. Several articles that comment on the percentage of academic librarians holding full or partial faculty status are cited in DeBoer and Culotta, "The Academic Librarian," 216. The authors conclude that 70%-80% of all academic librarians may have some form of faculty status. For those who claim full faculty status, the figure drops to 35%-45%.
 23. Werrell and Sullivan, "Faculty Status," p.97.
 24. A "complex variety of librarian benefits and responsibilities in academia" are reported in Janet Krompart and Clara DiFelice, "A Review of Faculty Status Surveys, 1971-1984," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 13:14-18 (March 1987), p.14. The difficulties librarians have in trying to "juggle" administrative and technical duties with scholarly, community and collegial obligations while working a twelve-month year at a salary at "the low end of the pay scale" is commented upon in Werrell and Sullivan, "Faculty Status," p.96.
 25. Cook, "Rank, Status and Contribution"; Budd and Coutant, "Faculty Perceptions"; and Divay, Ducas, and Michaud-Oystryk, "Faculty Perceptions."
 26. In a review of librarians' expectations of faculty and administrators, Moffett suggests that "the mission of the library may tend to be dimly perceived . . . because of failings on the part of the librarian," and that "the assistance we need . . . has not always been well understood." William A. Moffett, "What the Academic Librarian Wants from Administrators and Faculty," in *New Directions for Higher Education: Priorities for Academic Libraries*, ed. T. Galvin and B. Lynch (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982).
 27. Pauline Wilson, "Mission and Information: What Business are We In?" *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 14:82-86 (May 1988), p.82.
 28. Veaner, "1985 to 1995: The Next Decade," p.216.
 29. Ibid.
 30. Patricia Battin, "The Library: Center of the Restructured University," *College & Research Libraries* 45:171-72 (May 1984).

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

We would like you to participate in a study designed to examine the role of librarians at Albion College. The purpose of the survey is threefold. It is intended to

- determine the extent of faculty-librarian interaction at Albion College;
- learn about your perceptions of the librarians at Albion College;
- contribute to the understanding of the role of academic librarians generally.

All responses will be kept confidential. An abstract of the results of this survey will be made available to all participating Albion College faculty.

The title "librarian" is used to identify library personnel holding the terminal master's degree in library and information science and employed in professional positions. At Albion College, librarians perform functions such as collection assessment and development, reference, library instruction, cataloging, and administration.

1. How useful are librarians in keeping you informed of changes in the library?

_____a. very useful

- b. useful
 c. neutral
 d. of little use
 e. not useful
2. How useful are librarians in keeping you informed of new publications in your discipline?
- a. very useful
 b. useful
 c. neutral
 d. of little use
 e. not useful
3. How useful are librarians in assisting you in your teaching activities?
- a. very useful
 b. useful
 c. neutral
 d. of little use
 e. not useful
4. How often do you refer students to a librarian?
- a. almost daily
 b. several times a month
 c. about once a month
 d. several times a year
 e. almost never
5. How much are librarians involved in the education of your students?
- a. very substantially
 b. substantially
 c. some
 d. very little
 e. none
6. Who do you think should be primarily responsible for selecting library books in the following areas? (1 = primarily faculty; 3 = equal responsibility; 5 = primarily librarians)
- a. reference
 1 2 3 4 5
 b. general interest/casual reading
 1 2 3 4 5
 c. interdisciplinary subjects
 1 2 3 4 5
 d. course-related subjects
 1 2 3 4 5
 e. faculty research subjects
 1 2 3 4 5
7. How do you perceive the librarian's role in the College in terms of the following activities? Rank in order of importance: 1, 2, 3, 4 (1 = high, 4 = low)
- a. teaching
 b. research
 c. service
 d. management
8. Do you view librarians as:
- a. academics equal with teaching faculty
 b. professionals
 c. semi- or paraprofessionals
 d. clerks
 e. other (please specify) _____
9. Should librarians be eligible for tenure?
- a. yes
 b. no
- 9a. If you answered no to question 9, is it because of:
 Select as many as applicable.
- a. insufficient contributions to teaching
 b. insufficient research and publication

- c. insufficient service to the institution
 d. insufficient education
 e. other (please specify) _____
-
10. Should librarians have faculty rank and status?
 a. yes
 b. no
- 10a. If you answered no to question 10, is it because of:
Select as many as applicable.
 a. insufficient contributions to teaching
 b. insufficient research and publication
 c. insufficient service to the institution
 d. insufficient education
 e. other (please specify) _____
-
11. Do you feel librarians should conduct research? Check one.
 a. on practical topics related to improving service
 b. on scholarly library topics
 c. both a and b
 d. librarians should not conduct research
 e. other (please specify) _____
-
12. How would you characterize the research that you do:
Check one:
 a. contributes primarily to updating and revising the courses I teach.
 b. contributes primarily to research and publishing.
 c. contributes equally to teaching and publishing.
13. How important is the role of librarians in the conduct of your research?
 a. very important
 b. important
 c. neutral
 d. of little importance
 e. unimportant
14. In the library setting, what contact do you have with librarians? Select as many as are applicable.
 a. reference assistance
 b. collection development (book and journal selection)
 c. computerized literature searching
 d. library instruction and orientation
 e. library policy issues
 f. other (please specify) _____
-
15. Outside the library setting, what contact do you have with librarians? Select as many as are applicable.
 a. faculty/departmental meetings
 b. faculty/college committee meetings
 c. college social functions
 d. private social functions
 e. other (please specify) _____
-
16. Who are the librarians that you know by name?

-
17. Which units of the Albion College Library do you use frequently? Select as many as are applicable.
 a. book collection
 b. journal collection
 c. interlibrary loan
 d. database searching
 e. reference
 f. library instruction
 g. videocassette collection

- _____h. government documents
18. How often do you use the library?
- _____a. almost daily
- _____b. weekly
- _____c. monthly
- _____d. several times a year
- _____e. almost never
19. What faculty rank do you hold?
- _____a. professor
- _____b. associate professor
- _____c. assistant professor or instructor
20. In which division of the College are you a faculty member?
- _____a. science, including physical education
- _____b. social sciences
- _____c. humanities, including history
- _____d. fine arts

Are there comments that you wish to make about Albion College librarians that have not been brought out by this questionnaire? (Continue on back of form if necessary.) Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

The literature dealing with instruction in the use of libraries is fairly extensive, although it is essentially repetitious in character.

—M. D. Sprague, April 1949