

Administrators' Views of Library Personnel Status

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A questionnaire survey elicited the opinions of forty-seven university administrators (nonlibrarians) on the issue of faculty status for academic librarians. An analysis of the survey results led the author to conclude that academic institutions may lack a clear rationale for granting librarians faculty status. This conclusion was based primarily on the fact that the opinions expressed by administrators tended to confirm the validity of two key suppositions: (1) that, presently at least, there are no substantive advantages to an institution for granting librarians faculty status and (2) that the terms and conditions of faculty appointments are largely unsuited to the day-to-day activities and responsibilities of librarians.



Is it to the advantage of an academic institution to place its librarians in the same personnel category as its regular teaching faculty? Is it to the advantage of librarians to have faculty status, as opposed to a professional or administrative classification? Are the traditional, primary faculty requirements for tenure—demonstrated effectiveness in teaching and research—appropriate to the regular duties and responsibilities of librarians? Answers to these questions were sought by the author through an analysis of opinions collected from university administrators of forty-seven academic member institutions of the Association of Research Libraries.

METHODOLOGY

The author first conducted an extensive search of the literature in an effort to determine if the views of college and university administrators on the subject of librarian status had been published. Finding only one relevant article,¹ the author elected to carry out a survey designed specifically to solicit such views. Accordingly, a questionnaire was sent to the office of academic affairs, or the equivalent adminis-

trative office, in each of the eighty-nine U.S. academic member institutions of the Association of Research Libraries. Eventually, completed questionnaires were returned by administrators (nonlibrarians) of forty-seven different institutions—52.8 percent of the target group. Thirty-two of the respondents were from state institutions, and fifteen were from private institutions (see table 1). Librarians were reported to have faculty status in twenty-one of the institutions, and professional (nonfaculty) status in twenty-six (see table 2).

The original survey, which consisted of ten questions, was augmented by several short, follow-up surveys. Five of the original questions were directed at, and answered by, all forty-seven respondents. The other five questions were directed only at those institutions whose librarians had faculty status, so that, appropriately, only twenty-one respondents answered the latter queries. The purpose of the follow-up surveys was to obtain brief written statements from respondents in support of their answers to key questions. Thus, more than thirty supplementary statements were added to the initial ques-

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TABLE 1
LIST OF PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

State Institutions (32)		Private Institutions (15)
1. Arizona	17. Michigan	1. Boston
2. California at Davis	18. Michigan State	2. Case Western
3. Cincinnati	19. Nebraska	3. Columbia
4. Colorado	20. Ohio State	4. Cornell
5. Colorado State	21. Oklahoma	5. Dartmouth
6. Connecticut	22. Oregon	6. Duke
7. Florida	23. Purdue	7. Georgetown
8. Florida State	24. South Carolina	8. Miami
9. Georgia	25. SUNY at Albany	9. Northwestern
10. Illinois	26. Tennessee	10. Princeton
11. Indiana	27. Texas A&M	11. Southern California
12. Iowa	28. Utah	12. Stanford
13. Iowa State	29. Virginia	13. Syracuse
14. Kansas	30. Virginia Polytechnic	14. Tulane
15. Louisiana State	31. Washington (Seattle)	15. Yale
16. Maryland	32. Wisconsin	

TABLE 2
PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS LISTED ACCORDING
TO THE PERSONNEL STATUS OF THEIR LIBRARIANS

Institutions Reporting Faculty Status for Librarians (21)	Institutions Reporting Nonfaculty Status for Librarians (26)
1. Arizona	1. Boston
2. Colorado	2. California at Davis
3. Colorado State	3. Case Western
4. Florida	4. Cincinnati
5. Illinois	5. Columbia
6. Iowa State	6. Connecticut
7. Kansas	7. Cornell
8. Louisiana State	8. Dartmouth
9. Miami	9. Duke
10. Nebraska	10. Florida State
11. Ohio State	11. Georgetown
12. Oklahoma	12. Georgia
13. Oregon	13. Indiana
14. Purdue	14. Iowa
15. South Carolina	15. Maryland
16. Southern California	16. Michigan
17. SUNY at Albany	17. Michigan State
18. Tennessee	18. Northwestern
19. Texas A&M	19. Princeton
20. Virginia	20. Stanford
21. Virginia Polytechnic	21. Syracuse
	22. Tulane
	23. Utah
	24. Washington (Seattle)
	25. Wisconsin
	26. Yale

tionnaire data. These statements, in the opinion of the author, greatly enriched the content of the final report.

ADVANTAGES TO LIBRARIANS

The first question of the survey asked

whether administrators thought faculty status is an advantage to librarians. Overall, thirty-one of forty-seven respondents (66 percent) felt that faculty status was of "some" or "considerable advantage" to librarians. As might be expected, in those institutions whose librarians had faculty

status, an even larger majority (85.7 percent) were of the same opinion. In those institutions whose librarians had nonfaculty status, respondents were evenly divided in their views. Thirteen of these twenty-six respondents (50 percent) felt that librarians were advantaged by faculty status, while the other thirteen (50 percent) felt that faculty status provided "no advantage" to librarians.

COMPARISON OF LIBRARIAN BENEFITS AND PRIVILEGES

In table 3, the benefits and privileges of faculty librarians were compared with those of nonfaculty librarians in the institutions surveyed. The results indicated that faculty status does tend to provide more advantages to librarians than does nonfaculty status. At the same time, faculty status may impose terms and conditions of appointment on the probationary appointee that are neither advantageous nor desirable. This seeming paradox, whose roots lie in the difficulties encountered in the interpretation of faculty tenure requirements for librarians, is discussed later in the report.

ADVANTAGES TO THE INSTITUTION

As for advantages to the institution of granting librarians faculty status, the majority of administrators held a more negative view. Only three of forty-seven respondents (6.4 percent), all from state institutions with faculty librarians, were of the opinion that faculty status for librar-

ians was of "considerable advantage" to the institution. Sixteen respondents (34 percent) indicated "some advantage," while twenty-eight respondents (59.6 percent) felt that faculty status for librarians was of "no advantage" to the institution. Several respondents who indicated "some advantage" to the institution also added marginal notes such as "little" or "very few." And one respondent noted that "while there are some advantages to the institution, there are more disadvantages." Even more revealing, perhaps, was the fact that eight administrators—representing institutions with faculty librarians—thought that granting librarians faculty status was of "no advantage" to the institution.

Substantive advantages to the institution—measurable benefits or gains that could only be achieved by librarians with faculty status—were not readily discernible, either in the literature of librarianship, or in the data collected in the survey. Any advantages that may have once been gained by an institution in recruitment (e.g., during the 1960s) would appear to be largely nullified in the diminished 1980s job market. But in the past at least, some institutions evidently believed that the ability to offer librarians faculty appointments tended to give them an edge in the recruitment of once-scarce personnel. Data showed that fourteen of twenty-one respondents (66.7 percent) felt that competition in recruitment was of "some" or "considerable importance" in the institution's original decision to grant librarians faculty status.

TABLE 3
BENEFITS AND PRIVILEGES OF FACULTY LIBRARIANS VERSUS
NONFACULTY LIBRARIANS (BY NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS)

	Institutions with Faculty Librarians (21)	Institutions with Nonfaculty Librarians (26)
Faculty rank	14 (66.7%)	0 (0%)
Indefinite tenure	19 (90.5%)	1 (3.8%)
Pension	21 (100%)	26 (100%)
Research funds	19 (90.5%)	14 (53.8%)
Travel funds	21 (100%)	26 (100%)
Research leave	17 (81%)	19 (73.1%)
Sabbatical leave	18 (85.7%)	4 (15.4%)
Tuition break	13 (61.9%)	19 (73.1%)
Option of nine-month appointment	6 (28.6%)	6 (23.1%)

PERCEIVED ADVANTAGES

Statements provided by administrators fell into two categories: (1) statements of perceived advantages to the institution, and (2) statements of perceived disadvantages to the institution of granting librarians faculty status. In listing their perceived advantages to the institution, administrators focused on chiefly psychological factors, with a good deal of conjecture about the probable (desirable) influence of faculty status on librarian conduct and performance. The result was a rather idealized portrait of the librarian as a faculty member. Analysis of the statements revealed the following: (1) faculty status allegedly attracted a "better qualified, more academically oriented professional to library service"; (2) faculty status was believed to improve the morale and self-esteem of librarians, giving them "a closer feeling of belonging to the institution, rather than second-class citizenship"; (3) faculty status was purported to prompt the acceptance of librarians "as professional peers by faculty members in other disciplines"; (4) faculty status was thought to motivate librarians to "act responsibly," exhibit a "professional attitude toward the position," and to "develop research programs"; and (5) faculty status was believed to open the way for librarians "to participate on university committees," to "participate in all faculty curricular deliberations, and thus understand the course and direction of university academic policy."

If it is true, as suggested in some of the aforementioned statements, that it is to the institution's advantage to encourage librarians to develop research projects, to serve on faculty committees, and to participate in curricular deliberations, etc., it does not necessarily follow that these goals can only be achieved by granting librarians faculty status. On the contrary, in some of the institutions surveyed, it was found that the lack of faculty status did not deter librarians from participating fully in the academic enterprise:

Librarians at . . . University have many of the same rights and privileges as faculty. . . . They can achieve tenured status. . . . They have sab-

atical leave opportunities; they participate in the same fringe-benefit system as faculty; and they are represented on the Faculty Council and participate fully on many faculty committees.

Librarians at . . . University are provided opportunity for librarian/instructional staff interaction and consultation through membership in the University Senate, election to the Senate Assembly, and the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs, and all committees established by this governance structure. Librarians are also encouraged to develop research projects and to contribute to other original scholarship.

Librarians at . . . University are placed in an "academic librarian" classification (nonfaculty). However, they are eligible to serve on the University Senate (two positions are reserved for the libraries), and on university standing committees, either by election or by appointment. Currently, a librarian is serving on the Senate Executive Committee. Also, librarians in this institution are eligible for academic leave with pay, so that they may have additional opportunities to carry out original research.

PERCEIVED DISADVANTAGES OF FACULTY STATUS

Statements of perceived disadvantages to the institution for granting librarians faculty status were nearly uniform in singling out the unsuitability for librarians of the traditional faculty requirements for tenure—demonstrated effectiveness in teaching and research. These traditional tenure requirements were thought by administrators to be inappropriate for librarians because (1) librarians have "different basic responsibilities" from the regular teaching faculty; (2) their "work and traditions are different"; and (3) "the degree of freedom and independence afforded librarians is much less than for the faculty." As a consequence:

Librarians have difficulty in meeting common standards of teaching and scholarship.

—vice-president for academic affairs

Only a very few of the academic librarians can meet faculty requirements for tenure.

—associate vice-president for academic affairs

It is inappropriate to place librarians under the same evaluation criteria. They are not faculty.

—assistant provost

Promotion and tenure decisions are difficult be-

cause the criteria for librarians are different than for faculty generally.

—provost

APPROPRIATE CLASSIFICATION OF LIBRARIANS

The next two items of the survey sought administrators' opinions regarding the most appropriate classification for academic librarians. Only eleven of forty-seven respondents (23.4 percent) were of the opinion that librarians were appropriately classed as faculty, while thirty-six respondents (76.6 percent) were of the opinion that academic librarians were more appropriately classed as nonfaculty. All twenty-six of the administrators from institutions with nonfaculty librarians (100 percent) felt that librarians were more appropriately placed in a nonfaculty category. In contrast, administrators from institutions whose librarians were faculty were in considerable disagreement on this question. Ten of these twenty-one respondents (47.6 percent) expressed the view that librarians in their institutions—who had faculty status—would be more appropriately classed nonfaculty.

LIBRARIAN SATISFACTION

Data revealed that the great majority of administrators felt that librarians in their institutions were satisfied with their personnel status. Only two of forty-seven respondents (04.3 percent) indicated that librarians in their institutions were dissatisfied with their present personnel status. At one university, according to the respondent from that institution, librarians were dissatisfied because "a significant number of librarians, at least, want full faculty status, but without scholarship or publishing requirements." At another university, whose librarians were reported to have nonfaculty status, librarians were apparently situated in a hybrid of faculty and professional status that tended to require case-by-case interpretation for each new question that arose.

DIFFICULTIES WITH TENURE REQUIREMENTS

The final four questions of the survey were directed only at those institutions

whose librarians were reported to have faculty status, so that, appropriately, only twenty-one respondents went on to complete these items. The questions were designed to prompt administrators to compare librarian activities and responsibilities with those of the regular teaching and research faculty and to consider if the terms and conditions of faculty appointments were appropriate for librarians. None of the twenty-one respondents (0 percent) felt that there was a "strong similarity" between librarian and faculty activities and responsibilities. Nine respondents (42.9 percent) felt that there was "some similarity," while twelve respondents (57.1 percent) were of the opinion that there was "little similarity" between faculty and librarian activities and responsibilities.

Administrators were then asked if the institution had ever been required to relax or amend the traditional, primary faculty requirements for tenure in order to grant tenure to librarians. Two respondents (09.5 percent) indicated "no" to this question, but nineteen of twenty-one respondents (90.5 percent) indicated "yes" that the traditional tenure requirements—demonstrated effectiveness in teaching and research—had been relaxed or amended in order to grant tenure to librarians. As a follow-up to this question, those respondents who had indicated "yes" were asked to provide a brief statement explaining why the faculty criteria were altered or given a different emphasis for librarians. Thirteen administrators furnished statements. An analysis of the statements revealed a rather striking ambivalence toward librarians as faculty members. All thirteen respondents had earlier acknowledged that librarians in their institutions had been accorded faculty status. But the tenor of their statements strongly suggested that probably none of them actually perceived librarians to be faculty—at least not in the traditional sense of the word. Rather, librarians tended to be characterized in the statements as a unique professional group, separate and distinct from the regular teaching and research faculty. To begin with, librarians were seen to play a negligible role as classroom teachers, as the fol-

lowing extracts from the statements attest:

Librarians at our institution do not teach . . .

. . . teaching effectiveness [of librarians] has not been considered . . .

No teaching required of librarians . . .

. . . librarians do little or no formal teaching . . .

Moreover, the respondents appeared to expect little from librarians in the way of scholarship and research, as evidenced by the following excerpts:

Librarians have never been required to demonstrate scholarship or research . . .

Less rigorous requirement for original scholarship and publication.

. . . nor do they [librarians] conduct research as it is conventionally viewed . . .

Librarians . . . simply are not trained well enough to even approach the level of research we expect and get from the basic disciplines . . .

The role that these administrators did perceive for librarians tended to emphasize traditional librarianship, with its attendant concern for professional competence and service:

Librarians are judged on criteria of service to library users, community service, technical knowledge and competence.

Less emphasis on teaching and research, more upon professional expertise, service, and improvement of library resources.

More emphasis upon university service and professional activity . . .

The next survey item asked respondents to compare untenured librarians with untenured members of the teaching faculty, in regard to their relative capability to meet the traditional faculty requirements for tenure. Fourteen of twenty-one respondents (66.7 percent) were of the opinion that if the faculty performance criteria were applied evenly and stringently for all untenured faculty, untenured librarians would find it "considerably more difficult" to meet the traditional criteria than would untenured teaching faculty. (Several respondents added the word *impossible*.) Three respondents (14.3 percent) indicated that librarians would find it "somewhat more difficult," while four respondents (19 percent) felt that librarians would find it "no more difficult" to meet the traditional criteria.

TERMINATIONS

In his earlier study,² the author found that faculty librarians up for tenure or promotion were characteristically required to meet two distinct sets of performance criteria: one set designed to measure competence in librarianship; the other set designed to measure effectiveness in teaching and research. Moreover, the earlier study uncovered a case in which a "superb reference librarian" had been terminated for failing to meet faculty teaching and publishing requirements.³ Prompted by his knowledge of that incident, the author sought to document other cases in which faculty librarians, who were judged to be performing effectively as librarians, had been terminated for failing to meet the traditional faculty requirements for tenure. Indeed, the results revealed that such terminations had occurred in five of the twenty-one reporting institutions (23.8 percent). Details of these terminations were not revealed in the data returned, so that the weight given the faculty criteria relative to the weight given the professional criteria in these situations could not be determined. Whatever the case, the incidence of such dismissals does draw attention to the double-bind difficulties confronting librarians who are required to meet two sets of performance criteria—particularly when the primary faculty criteria are rigorously applied.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Administrators tended to perceive academic librarians—including those with faculty appointments—to be a distinct, professional (nonfaculty) group, with duties and responsibilities different from those of the regular teaching and research faculty. Evidently, the term *faculty status* was not considered by administrators to be synonymous with the word *faculty*.

Only eleven of forty-seven respondents (23.4 percent) felt that librarians were appropriately classed as faculty, while the great majority (76.6 percent) were of the opinion that academic librarians were more appropriately placed in a professional (nonfaculty) personnel category.

Sixty-six percent of the respondents

were of the opinion that librarians were advantaged by the provision of faculty status. At the same time, however, 59.6 percent were of the opinion that granting librarians faculty status was of no advantage to the institution. Difficulty with the interpretation of faculty tenure requirements for librarians was most often cited by administrators as the principal disadvantage—both to the institution and to librarians—of granting librarians faculty status.

In attempting to list perceived advantages to the institution of granting librarians faculty status, administrators appeared to focus chiefly on psychological factors, with a tendency to indulge in conjecture about the supposed uplifting effects of faculty status on librarians' attitudes, conduct, and performance. But none of the stated advantages to the institution were felt by the author to be substantive. At one time, the ability to offer librarians faculty status was apparently thought to give the institution an advantage in the recruitment of once-scarce library personnel, e.g., during the 1960s. But such an advantage would seem to be largely nullified in the diminished job market of the 1980s.

More than 90 percent of the respondents from institutions with faculty librarians answered "yes" that the institution had been required to relax or amend the traditional, primary faculty requirements for tenure—demonstrated effectiveness in teaching and research—in order to grant tenure to librarians. Moreover, 81 percent of this group of respondents felt that if institutions were to apply tenure requirements evenly and stringently for all their probationary faculty, untenured librarians would find it more difficult to meet the requirements than would untenured members of the teaching faculty. And, fi-

nally, 23.8 percent of these respondents reported that there had been cases in their institutions in which librarians—who were otherwise performing their jobs satisfactorily—had been terminated because they did not meet faculty tenure requirements.

CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the opinions of forty-seven university administrators (nonlibrarians) suggested that academic institutions may lack a rational basis for granting librarians faculty status. To begin with, an interpretation of the opinions provided led the author to conclude that, presently at least, there are no substantive advantages to an institution for placing its librarians in the same personnel category as its regular teaching faculty. Indeed, the survey results tended to support the view that librarians with professional (nonfaculty) status—given equal opportunity and encouragement—can probably serve the needs of the institution as effectively as librarians with faculty status, with few, if any, of the inherent drawbacks. Moreover, taken in toto, the opinions expressed by administrators suggested that the terms and conditions of faculty appointments are largely inappropriate to the principal activities and responsibilities of librarians: librarians were seen by administrators to play a negligible role as classroom teachers; and administrators seemed to expect little of librarians in the way of scholarship and research contributions. The role that administrators did seem to consider most appropriate for librarians tended to emphasize the duties and functions of traditional librarianship. Thus, professional competence, technical expertise, and service were seen by administrators as the principal concerns of academic librarians.

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