



IJIDI: Book Review

Bailey, E., & Becher, M. (2022). *Academic librarian faculty status: CLIPP #47.* Association of College & Research Libraries.

ISBN 978-0-8389-3664-1. 163 pp. \$52 US

Reviewer: Andrew Wertheimer, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, USA

Book Review Editors: Halie Kerns, Binghamton University, USA
Stephanie Robertson, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, USA

Keywords: academic librarians, faculty status, promotion, tenure

Publication Type: book review

In an era when tenure and academic status protections are under attack by organized political forces (Schrecker, 2010), it is hardly surprising that the academic status of librarians remains a central issue of discussion in the library and information science (LIS) profession. *Academic Librarian Faculty Status* is a handbook for small and medium-sized academic libraries looking for models on how to create and implement policies regarding academic status. The book is part of the Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) College Library Information on Policy and Practice (CLIPP) series, published for the small and medium-sized college and university market. Edgar Bailey (University of Rhode Island) and Melissa Becher (American University) have produced a practical work that evidences their combined six decades of experience in American academic librarianship—on both the front line and in administration.

Bailey and Becher's CLIPP guide contains a survey, literature review, and sample policy documents relevant to the academic status of librarians in the United States. The literature review offers an overview of the topic of the academic status of librarians with a thematic analysis of nearly 150 articles published in the past two decades. The literature review highlights a few earlier significant works on subjects such as surveys, support programs, policies, and non-tenure-track faculty librarians.

In 2020, the authors sent a survey to an ACRL email list of over 1,000 directors of small and medium-sized academic libraries to solicit feedback on the faculty status of academic librarians. From that population, 174 participants completed the online survey. Most respondents were from small, private college libraries staffing four or fewer librarians. Not surprisingly, libraries with fewer professionals were less likely to have "tenure-eligible" librarian positions. The study found that even librarians without tenure protection could still participate in academic governance and exercise some rights in common with other instructional faculty, which ranged from faculty senate participation (91%), academic freedom (75%), grievance policy (27%), sabbatical/ leave (27%), to library faculty senate

(30%) (p. 39). Not surprisingly, having a master's in library science (MLS) degree was reported as the requirement for 94% of these positions, while 20% required a second graduate degree for either tenure or promotion. Evaluation criteria for promotion and tenure were found to be dependent on the following factors: librarian responsibilities, scholarship, service, and "[c]ontributions to the profession of librarianship," followed by teaching (p. 35).

To support librarians' research, the authors found that only 24% of libraries reported offering formal mentorship, while 83% had options for librarians to secure some sabbatical or academic leave. One of the most exciting aspects of this volume was the brief discussion of libraries trying to adopt or defend faculty status for academic librarians, especially in organizations with dual-track positions. This section certainly merits further research.

Nearly half of the book's contents were sample documents from 11 institutions relevant to different aspects of academic status. At first glance, including these documents might seem like a questionable contribution in an age where one can find many policy documents online. Still, smaller academic libraries will treasure these documents in a book because they offer access to policies that may not be readily accessible online. For this reviewer, the most valuable inclusion in this section of the book was the section titled "Institution Redacted" with the paper "Faculty Appointments for Librarians: A Position Paper." This paper offers an excellent example of how one library made a case for defending librarians' academic status.

Readers of this journal are presumably especially interested in how issues related to diversity and inclusion interplay with the tenure process of academic librarians. Indeed, Bailey and Becher rightly point out that "There is a growing awareness in academia of the burden of invisible labor on BIPOC and other marginalized groups and the need to recognize DEI work as part of a faculty member's primary responsibilities of scholarship and service" (p. 44). Unfortunately, this discussion is relegated to a short "Future Research" section with the statement, "It would be interesting to find out how librarians are going beyond a general blanket statement to address DEI in their re-appointment and promotion criteria" (p. 44). Advocates of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) would also agree with Bailey and Becher's call for more research on the impact of institutions with tenure-eligible and non-eligible positions. They also rightly suggest further research on academic freedom protection for a librarian's independent judgment and agency, as per ACRL standards. It is also essential to explore the academic protection for librarians in historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and tribal colleges since many of these essential higher education establishments face challenges that can impact library faculty status (Saunders, 2019).

It would be easy to make other demands of this thin volume. For example, as a library historian, I regretted the absence of a history of the struggle for academic librarians to achieve and maintain academic freedom protection. Nor do the authors spend much space on the more significant attack on tenure in academia (Schrecker, 2010), which certainly impacts the debate concerning librarians' status. Likewise, as a former reference librarian, I am disappointed by the lack of an index, although one certainly can perform keyword searching of the eBook edition.

Bailey and Becher's *Academic Librarian Faculty Status* is not a general introduction to the topic of academic librarian faculty status for LIS students or academic librarians; it was not intended to be. The volume is a straightforward manual for libraries seeking to implement an infrastructure for academic status with excellent sample documents from public and

private academic libraries, a literature review, and an analysis of a qualitative survey that evidences the status of academic librarians as university faculty. I am confident that busy librarians at small to medium-sized college and university libraries will treasure this work as they try to shape policies tailored to their own college's academic policies while also engaging in the daily practice of librarianship.

References

Saunders, R. (2019). Editor's Note. *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage*, 20(2), 67-68. <https://doi.org/10.5860/rbm.20.2.67>

Schrecker, E. (2010). *The lost soul of higher education: Corporatization, the assault on academic freedom, and the end of the American university*. New York: The New Press.

Andrew Wertheimer (wertheim@hawaii.edu) is an Associate Professor in the Library & Information Science (LIS) Program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, USA. His research explores interdisciplinary streams within the historical and social aspects of ethnic print cultures, libraries, and professional education and ethics for the information professions, emphasizing libraries and archives. Dr. Wertheimer is also conducting studies on Asian American and Pacific Islanders in LIS, the history of intellectual freedom education, Japanese Print Culture, and several other projects. He also is working on a book about the history of libraries and archives in Hawai'i. He previously worked as a librarian and archivist at the Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership in Chicago, Illinois, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Dr. Wertheimer has a Ph.D. in Library Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an MLS from Indiana University, Bloomington, USA.