Experiences with faculty status in academic libraries

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The State University and College Librarians Chapter of CLA has long been interested in obtaining "full faculty status" for State University and College Librarians. With librarians from all over the country coming to San Francisco to attend the ALA Conference, this chapter felt it would be an excellent opportunity to invite librarians who already had faculty status to meet with us and share their experiences. Susan McCargar, Kentucky State University; Bette Hurst, South West Missouri State University; Mary Walters presently at Los Angeles State University, formerly at Ohio State University; Jack King, Hamline State University, Minnesota; and Mary Neline, West Chester State College, Pennsylvania generously gave their time to share experiences with us. The major issues discussed were how faculty status affects tenure and promotional opportunities, working schedules, and library services and job responsibilities.

Tenure and Promotional Opportunities

The Faculty Committee at Kentucky State which decides on promotions for Librarians has no Librarians on it. Candidates for promotion to the top two ranks must provide three letters of recommendation from off-campus sources. Librarians do receive tenure at Kentucky.

At South West Missouri State University, librarians receive tenure in their seventh year if recommended by all tenured librarians. The library personnel committee recommends the librarian to be promoted to the Librarian who recommends the person to the Dean. So for the requests have been granted, A librarian is eligible for promotion after three years. Unlike some of the California State Universities, Ohio State University's personnel office has nothing to do with the promotion of librarians except to see that the name is correctly spelled and the amount is correct on their check. The rank a librarian achieves is not related to position in the library hierarchy, but rather to the person's professional achievements. Promotions are based on how well the librarian does the job and meets the academic requirements stated in the faculty handbook. Degrees and equivalency have not presented a problem because the library has defined "equivalency." Publications are evaluated by an expert. The Senior Faculty of the Library (Associate Librarians and above) advise the Director on matters of appointment, tenure, and promotion. Promotion and tenure matters go from the Library Director to the Dean to the Office of Academic Affairs. Tenure is given in the sixth year. If the initial appointment is to the rank of Instructor or Assistant Professor, job performance must be considered successful for the first three years or the person is dropped. If appointed at the Associate Professor rank, the first year is probationary and the second year's appointment includes automatic tenure. Appointment at the Full Professor rank includes tenure.

At Hamline University librarians are tenured in the sixth year. The second masters degree has been defined as the terminal degree for librarians. The Faculty Personnel Committee does not include librarians. Each librarian works closely with instructors and classes and often receives student evaluations as does the teacher. Librarians also seek their faculty peers for evaluations. The low pay scale at Hamline combined with the second Masters degree requirement seems to be narrowing librarians down to either single people or married persons with working spouses.

At West Chester State University tenure is granted in the third year. The Ph.D. degree is necessary to obtain promotion to full professor. At present, to fulfill the student evaluation requirement, student employees have filled out questionnaires, but it has not been working well. No librarians have been denied tenure.

Working Schedules

Kentucky State University librarians have twenty-two days of vacation and four days off at Christmas and New Years. At South West Missouri State, librarians have a nine month year and receive additional pay for summer work.

At Ohio State University, appointments are for nine or twelve months, depending on one's position and the effect of a long vacation on job responsibilities. Department heads seldom get nine month appointments. The week work consists of thirty-two hours at one's appointed position with eight hours of research time. This research time must be justified in the yearly personnel report so librarians may use the additional eight hours to work on their regular assignment if they prefer. Librarians on twelve month appointments receive twenty-one days of vacation, and a five day Christmas vacation holiday that is lost if not used between December 15 and January 2. At Hamline and West Chester, librarians have a nine month year and the same pay schedule as the faculty. West Chester has a thirty-five hour work week.

Library Services and Job Responsibilities

At Kentucky, many librarians teach a course in the library school and are paid $1,000 for each course. The time away from the job is made up by working extra hours in the library (at a later date). At South West Missouri State where librarians have a nine month year, there are few scheduling problems. Semester breaks are usually covered by librarians who have summers off, although the arrangement is strictly voluntary. Everyone teaches library orientation. The Library Science
Department is not separated from the library and its faculty often works the reference desk on weekends. At Ohio State, during vacations periods, the library is run by a special administrative category of para-professional which is above the class of a library assistant. The position has a salary range higher than that of a beginning librarian at Harlins, because of librarians’ faculty status, the faculty view librarian visits at visits from a colleague rather than those of an administrative entity. The working relationships with the faculty have become very close.

Each librarian has his own clientele and works closely with classes. At West Chester State College, the librarians are very active on campus committees. The librarians cite this as one of the main reasons why the faculty supported their fight for faculty status.

In concluding remarks Anna Amaral spoke about the situation at the University of Nevada. Librarians there are on the same salary schedule as the faculty. She felt that equality brings more respect from faculty. Their scheduled forty hour week allows no time for research and study. Two librarians are on a ten month contract which they must complete thirty semester hours of graduate study in addition to the Master’s degree to be considered for tenure. Research and publication are difficult to accomplish outside a 37 1/2 hour working week. Few librarians can qualify for promotion beyond the rank of assistant professor because a doctorate is generally the minimum requirement for promotion to associate professor.

Librarians have equivalent faculty status including all the rights of the teaching faculty with regard to tenure, sabbatical leave, membership in the Faculty Senate, and promotions. Librarians are on twelve month appointments with thirty day vacations. Salaries are very hard to equate because they vary greatly from department to department or campus to campus. Moreover, the University is attempting to correct this. Librarians are neither asked to publish nor required to acquire additional degrees.

Librarians work an academic year of nine months. Although additional six weeks work in the summer at the same rate of pay as during the academic year, librarians have the same rights as faculty in regard to promotions, tenure and sabbaticals. For promotion to associate professor, librarians must take courses beyond the M.L.S. Librarians work thirty five hours per week and are involved in campus wide committees, accepting all the responsibilities of professors.

Assistant Professor: Masters degree plus 10 hours of graduate credit plus four years of teaching or library experience.

Associate Professor: 70 hours graduate credit plus 5 years of teaching or library experience.

Full Professor: Earned doctorate plus 7 years of teaching or library experience.

Librarians have had an academic year since the University began to be protected from the loss by a “grandfather” clause. This has been recognized recently and the Wisconsin library associations succeeded in overturning a line vote of the governor to remove librarians from academic rank.

Promotions from instructor to assistant librarian have been too difficult to acquire because the criteria is the same as for the teaching faculty. Only one member of the staff has acquired a degree or has taken courses past the M.L.S. Librarians are equal to teaching faculty with respect to rank and title, promotion criteria, tenure, rate of pay, holidays and vacations, and participation in faculty government.

In all of our correspondence and conversations with librarians who have faculty status, there was unanimous agreement that it is worth seeking. It enables librarians to develop professionally and to be promoted for the sake of their educational and intellectual qualifications. Supervision of fellow librarians is not viewed as the basic task of the librarian. Rather, as with the teaching faculty, being a Department head is an additional duty added to the main responsibilities of a faculty member. Both students and faculty benefit from the additional expertise of the librarians in various subject areas, their greater depth of service and increased involvement in campus governance.

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