

Faculty rank, status, and tenure for librarians

Current trends

by Shannon Cary

The issue of faculty status for academic librarians has been discussed within the profession for many years, and opinions have been expressed in both support of and opposition to the notion.

In 1990, ACRL adopted the "Guidelines for Academic Status for College and University Libraries" and the board stated that "ACRL supports faculty rank, status, and tenure for librarians."¹ And in a 1992 article, Bede Mitchell and Bruce Morton argued that librarians should embrace the academic model and strive to become full members of the academic community.² However, detractors also have voiced their opinions. Recently, Blaise Cronin wrote that the "obsession with [faculty] status merely detracts from customer service and weakens the profession's public image."³ Because this issue is of continuing interest to academic librarians, ACRL decided to illuminate this discussion by gathering data on faculty status.

Conditions for faculty status

In 1999, ACRL conducted its second annual survey of academic libraries. The survey included a series of questions designed to ascertain the extent to which institutions offer faculty status to academic librarians. Because there is no uniform definition of what constitutes faculty status, the survey questions asked which of the nine conditions listed in the

ACRL Guidelines for Academic Status were provided by the institution. Therefore, using the definitions in the ACRL standard, an individual institution may be providing complete faculty status, a limited version of faculty status, or no faculty status at all.

The data show that most academic librarians are provided some conditions of faculty status by their institutions, either fully or partially. But there also are some conditions that many librarians have not yet been granted. The data also illustrate the different academic conditions faced by librarians working at different types of institutions. In this article, we look at some of the key findings in the 1999 survey titled "Trends in Academic Libraries: Faculty Rank, Status, and Tenure for Librarians."

The nine conditions that constitute faculty status in ACRL's survey were:

1. Librarians are assigned professional responsibilities.
2. Librarians have a governance structure similar to other faculties on campus.
3. Librarians are eligible for membership in the faculty governing body.
4. Librarians have salary scales that are equivalent to those for other academic faculty.
5. Librarians are covered by the same tenure policies as other faculty.
6. Librarians are promoted through the ranks via a peer review system.

About the author

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Percentage of Institutions Providing Faculty Status Conditions

	Prof. Resp.	Govern. Structure	Eligible Gov. Bodies	Salary Equiv.	Tenure	Peer Review	Leave of Absence	Research Funding	Acad. Freedom
Not at all	24.7	21.5	30.4	43.3	35.5	35.2	21.1	13	0.3
Partially	29.2	25.7	39.1	18.1	20.9	19.4	40	15.6	91.6
Fully	46.1	52.8	30.5	38.6	43.6	45.4	47.9	71.4	8.1
# of Libraries	802	879	800	842	845	826	835	797	976

7. Librarians are eligible for leaves of absence or sabbaticals.

8. Librarians have access to funding for research projects.

9. Librarians have the same protections of academic freedom as other faculty.

The condition that almost all institutions grant their librarians is academic freedom. Of the respondents, 99.7 percent indicated that their institutions granted librarians the same protections of academic freedom as they did other faculty. But surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of respondents felt that this academic freedom was only partially granted.

Librarians also appear to be gaining equality with teaching faculty in the areas of leaves of absence and research funding. The respondents indicated they receive these conditions partially or fully (87.9% and 87%, respectively), with 71.4 percent indicating they have full access to funding for research projects and professional development on the same basis as other faculty.

The area in which librarians most often responded that they are not on equal footing with their teaching counterparts was salary scale, benefits, and appointment period, with 43.3 percent responding that their institutions did not provide equivalent salaries and benefits for librarians as they did for other academic faculty.

Tenure and peer review were also areas where a significant number of librarians indicated they are not on equal footing with other academic faculty, with 35.5 percent indicating they were not covered by the same tenure policies as other faculty and 35.2 percent indicating they were not promoted through the ranks on the basis of professional

proficiency and effectiveness via a peer review system with standards consistent with other faculty.

Discrepancies by type of institution and faculty

By comparing the conditions of faculty status given to librarians at the different types of institutions, some discrepancies become clear. According to the survey, salary issues are the most prominent area in which librarians and faculty are not being treated equally. Librarians at institutions granting bachelor of arts degrees report the most inequality in this area. Only 48.4 percent of librarians at this type of institution indicated having full or partial equity with other faculty in the area of salary scale, benefits, and appointment period, compared to 75.7 percent of librarians at institutions granting associates of arts degrees who responded that their institutions provide full or partial equity with other faculty regarding salaries. Moreover, librarians at institutions granting bachelor of arts degrees were less likely than librarians at other types of institutions to be covered by the same tenure process as other faculty. Only 48 percent of these institutions were reported as having full or partial tenure processes for librarians, whereas 66 to 67 percent of the other types of institutions were reported as partially or fully providing this condition. Overall, institutions granting associates of arts degrees were the most likely to partially or fully provide the conditions that define faculty status to librarians, and institutions granting bachelor of arts degrees were the least likely to provide these conditions to their librarians.

(continued on page 520)

and winter programs and training camps; a chapter listing for each state; and a legal information page providing information on the Americans with Disabilities Act and Amateur Sports Act. The Athlete Highlight features short biographies of disabled athletes who have overcome their disabilities to perform amazing feats. *Access:* <http://dsusa.org/>.

Watersports

• **Riversport.com.** Riversport.com presents information on canoeing, kayaking, rafting, and other river sports throughout the United States. Notable features include the Online River Guide, which provides information on trips, guides, clubs and organizations, safety, river camping, and other river-related topics. The guide is searchable by keyword or location. The Paddler's Choice Mall provides information on clothing and gear, and is searchable by keyword or category. *Access:* <http://www.riversport.com/>



• **Scuba Central.** A notable division of this site is Rick's Links, a collection of more than 2,000 diving links, e-mail lists, and FTP sites, presented in alphabetical order by category. Another useful section is About Diving, a free online magazine containing special-interest articles on topics such as dive instruction, photography, technical diving, and equipment. Other sections include Scuba Humor, Shopping, a Photo Gallery, and an Industry Guide. This useful guide includes a searchable database listing dive retailers, charter operators, resorts, training agencies, underwater equipment manufacturers and retailers, instructors, and clubs and organizations, to name a few. Inclusion in the guide is free. At present, there are not many listings, but this section has great potential. *Access:* <http://www.scubacentral.com/>.

• **Sporting Adventures LaunchPad.** The SPAV Web site began in 1995 and is devoted to raising funds for conservation groups worldwide. This fishing and hunting site contains information on lodges and guides, a photo library, classifieds, regional information, field guides, and a fishing and hunting directory.



The Lodges and Guides database is searchable by state, species, and sport, and includes information on more than 3,000 resorts and lodges specializing in hunting and fishing. This site also includes links to other fishing, hunting, camping, parks, and outdoor sports sites. Information is also provided on SPAV membership, which is free. *Access:* <http://www.spav.com/>.

Note

1. The National Park Visitor Use Summary is on the Web at <http://www2.nature.nps.gov/stats/summary99.pdf>. ■

("Faculty rank . . ." cont. from page 511)

Role of the librarian still evolving

Regardless of the controversy over the role of librarians in the academic community, it is clear that many librarians are receiving the rights and responsibilities of faculty status. As librarians' roles on campus continue to evolve, it is possible that certain conditions of faculty status may be seen as more or less appropriate for librarians. According to the ACRL statistics, the academic community has already agreed that librarians should receive research funding and academic freedom. But these institutions also have been slower to provide librarians with tenure and salaries that are equivalent to other faculty. By analyzing these data, academic librarians can gain a more complete picture of the state of the profession with regard to the criteria that define academic status.

Notes

1. "ACRL Guidelines for Academic Status for College and University Libraries," 1990. Available online at <http://www.ala.org/acrl/guides/acstatus.html>.

2. Bede W. Mitchell and Bruce Morton, "On Becoming Faculty Librarians: Acculturation Problems and Remedies," *College and Research Libraries* 53, no. 5 (Sept. 1992): 389.

3. Blaise Cronin, "The Mother of All Myths," *Library Journal* 126, no. 3 (Feb. 2001): 144. ■