

Paula Kaufman

Where did they come from? Where did they go?

The hunt for information about directors of ARL academic libraries

For reasons too complex to explain in this small space, I long have been interested in knowing more about what academic library directors do when they leave their positions. Do they move to directorships in other institutions? Retire? Become consultants? Something else?

The literature lacks rigorous evidence about post-directorship paths. To attempt to provide more reliable data than speculation, I have gathered as much information as I could find about every permanent director of every current and past academic library member of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), reaching back in time to the earliest years of each institution's history. My goal was to provide data that will enable analysis of post-director moves as well as to provide a look at trends in gender, length of service, titles, and appointments from, and/or to, the teaching faculty of this large group.¹

Although I eventually built a database, the journey was neither easy nor short, taking more than a year to carry out. I began with what I thought would be the relatively simple task of gathering names and dates of service of directors of all past and current ARL academic members from the beginning of the institution's history, including predecessor institutions. A small percentage of ARL members conveniently post the names and dates of their directors on an easily found location on their websites. A few of these postings include biographical information, but not all have been kept current and not all contain correct information. At least two institutions had such listings that were buried so deeply as to make finding them akin to going on a treasure

hunt. In one of those instances I was able to find the information by accessing an old version of the library's website. In the other, not only could I not find it, neither could members of the institution's reference staff. In the end, the library's director remembered the page and provided me with its address.

My next step was to contact institutional "Ask-a-Librarian" services (some carry other similar names). Many colleagues were very accommodating and either sent the information or links to the information, or referred the query to colleagues in the institution's archives, whose staff generally were very responsive.

In instances where they either sent me on wild goose chases (and yes, there were some) or failed to respond, I contacted the library's director. All but two responded quickly with the information I sought and several thanked me for prodding them to gather this information for what apparently was the first time. Two directors did not respond. I was able to track down an acquaintance in one who pointed me in the right direction. For the other, I turned to ARL staff who graciously provided most of what I needed. This is the institution whose list I eventually found buried deeply on a previous website.

It should be noted that not all the lists posted or provided by an institution, including that of my own library, are completely accurate. Archivists

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Washington University Libraries in St. Louis (WUSTL) has been awarded a two-year, \$250,000 grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources to support the “Revealing Visual Culture: Digitizing Modern Illustrated Periodical Tear Sheets in the Walt Reed Illustration Archive” project. The project will create digital images and supporting metadata for 150,000 tear sheets contained in the Walt Reed Illustration Archive. During the two-year project, an outside vendor will create digital files and initial metadata, and WUSTL Libraries staff will supervise student assistants to enhance the metadata and perform quality control. The resulting image database will be completely available to the public. WUSTL Libraries has also been awarded a two-year, \$517,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support the “Documenting the Now” project. Formed

as a collaboration with University of California-Riverside and University of Maryland, the project will build from Washington University’s Documenting Ferguson work and related efforts to develop a cloud-based application that will enable researchers to gather and analyze social media posts on Twitter related to social movements. Grant funds will support the hiring of a project coordinator at WUSTL Libraries, as well as contract programmers who will work with the tech development team located at University of Maryland’s Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities. This project was initially developed by Meredith Evans (now director of the Carter Presidential Library and Museum), with Chris Freeland (AUL at Washington University Libraries) stepping in to make the final submission and lead the project after Evans’s departure. *zz*

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were very gracious about acknowledging and correcting errors. I hope that my work has made a modest contribution to the histories of those institutions as well as to the history of research library leadership.

Almost every institution has called upon current employees to fill in as directors during periods between permanent director appointments. Most often these are library managers or faculty drawn from teaching departments. I have included the names of those individuals that were provided by their institutions but have made no attempts either to find the names of those not provided or to track down information about each of those individuals. I included information about those individuals when it appeared in various press releases or in the library literature. ARL has indicated its interest in adding information about interim appointees to the database.

Once I had as complete a set of names as was practical, I searched to find additional information about each person. In addition

to the information I found in the published book and journal literature, including LIS article databases and standard library encyclopedias and biographical dictionaries, I searched institutional archives sites; institutional public affairs office websites; general biographical reference sources, such as Who’s Who Online; campus newspapers; college and university catalogs; and general search engines such as Google and Bing.

In the end I was able to construct what I think is a reasonably accurate database. I am confident that it contains errors and will be grateful to receive corrections or to have those corrections made in the database, which is available openly at the address provided near the top of this article. I hope that the community will keep it updated as time goes on.

Note

1. Readers can openly access the results of this work at <http://hdl.handle.net/2142/78980>. *zz*