

Faculty Status for Librarians: Querying the Troops

Russ Davidson, Connie Capers Thorson,
and Diane Stine

This survey assesses the views of academic librarians within the Rocky Mountain region regarding the benefits and responsibilities of faculty status. The results show that the issue is controversial for several reasons and that not only are the librarians themselves divided over the question, but also that their views are frequently at variance with those of their directors.



In the May 1981 issue of *College & Research Libraries* (42:203-13), we reported on a survey of directors of academic libraries in the Rocky Mountain region regarding faculty status for academic librarians. While that survey indicated that most directors think faculty status is appropriate for librarians in academic institutions, it also demonstrated their uncertainty regarding the actual benefits accruing to librarians.

A second survey was undertaken to assess the views of the individual librarian. The results and analysis of this survey are discussed below. The primary purpose of the survey was to gauge the views of academic librarians on the subject of faculty status. The survey also sought to compare the responses between the library directors and their respective faculties regarding faculty status.

We were reinforced in our thinking that the views of the individual librarian are important by a letter to the editor appearing in the March 1981 issue of *College & Research Libraries* (42:149) from Brian Alley, (then at Miami University of Ohio, now the director of the Sangamon State University Library). In commenting on Greg Byerly's survey of academic library direc-

tors in Ohio concerning faculty status for librarians (*C&RL*, 41:422-29), Mr. Alley noted that all that was missing was the point of view of the librarians. "Byerly," he continued, "hits the nail on the head when he admits that asking directors to determine staff satisfaction with faculty status might not produce the desired information. Why then not query the troops?"¹ Mr. Alley's observation provides the context for our survey. We think that the results of the survey will be of interest to library faculty members both within and beyond the Rocky Mountain region.

METHODOLOGY

The previous survey of library directors comprised a total of forty institutions in the Rocky Mountain region in which all librarians had faculty status. We wrote to the directors of these forty libraries, requesting (1) permission to survey the library faculty, (2) the name of a contact person, and (3) the total number of librarians. Four directors did not respond, even to a second request. Of the thirty-six directors who did, one refused us permission for the survey. We then sent the questionnaires to the contact person who was

Russ Davidson and Connie Capers Thorson are both acquisitions librarians, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, and Diane Stine is head technical services librarian, Winnetka Public Library, Winnetka, Illinois.

asked to distribute the form with a stamped, addressed envelope to each librarian within the respective library. A total of 528 questionnaires were mailed. We received 368 responses, giving us a response rate of 69.8 percent. We received no responses from three of the thirty-five libraries ultimately contacted.

The questionnaire (see appendix A) was designed to measure the benefits and responsibilities attached to having faculty status, to inquire whether tenure and promotion requirements are the same for librarians as those for teaching faculty at the same institution, and, finally, to assess the nature and degree of any controversy that might surround this issue. As our criteria, we again used the standards for faculty status adopted by the Association of College and Research Libraries in 1971.²

Certain demographic data used in the first survey are not used here. However, other such data—type and form of control of the institution—are employed. These data, which we initially thought would be important, proved to be inconsequential. The demographic data used were taken from the 32d edition of the *American Library Directory*. Analysis of the survey results included such variables as benefits, responsibilities, rank, tenure status of respondent, and type of position.

FINDINGS

As stated above, 69.8 percent of the 528 questionnaires sent out were returned by librarians from thirty-two of the thirty-five institutions. The seven states included in the survey were New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana.

When asked whether controversy surrounds the question of faculty status for librarians in their institution, 61.4 percent (226) indicated that it does, 36.4 percent (134) that it does not, and 2.2 percent (8) chose not to answer the question. The very fact that in twenty-seven of the thirty-two libraries librarians are divided in their response supports the view that controversy does indeed exist (see table 1).

It is in Arizona that the degree of contro-

versy is the highest. Nearly 98 percent of surveyed librarians in Arizona indicated that there is controversy. This high percentage may arise from a recent decision by the current president of Arizona State University to reassess the provision of faculty status for librarians. As one respondent from Arizona State University points out, "We have been trying to get our status stabilized to our satisfaction for many years. It comes unstuck each time there is a change in the university's top administrators. Our new president has just decided that we are 'academic professionals,' a decision that bodes ill for our position." In the remaining six states, the responses were more evenly divided (see table 2).

Controversy over faculty status, as the librarians' comments make clear, arises from two sources: from outside the library and from within the ranks of the librarians themselves. Thus, while some respondents note that "every few years we librarians have to reaffirm, rejustify our faculty positions to the administration," others point out that the librarians themselves cannot agree about the benefits and responsibilities of faculty status. In this latter vein, another respondent comments, "The librarians at this university generally do not want to do very much that is 'professional' or 'scholarly,' yet want faculty status." A third adds that he does not like faculty status because "it is so controversial—others [librarians] don't agree it is desirable or beneficial and aren't willing to try to meet the requirements." Two further comments will serve to illustrate related aspects of the controversy as it is perceived by some librarians: "Our requirements for tenure change with the whims of university administration despite what the library handbook lists as requirements for tenure." "We have a critical problem with the University administration in that they will not accept the MLS plus masters as terminal degrees—thus our staff is frozen at Assistant Professor rank. Yet in such areas as Landscape Architecture and Communication and others the same restriction doesn't apply."

Table 3 shows that librarians without

TABLE 1
CONTROVERSY BY INSTITUTION

Institution	Yes, There Is Controversy		No, There Is No Controversy		No Response	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1	0	0	1	100	0	0
2	1	9	10	91	0	0
3	2	33	4	67	0	0
4	2	67	0	0	1	33
5	1	20	4	80	0	0
6	0	0	1	33	2	67
7	0	0	1	100	0	0
8	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	2	50	2	50	0	0
11	3	75	1	25	0	0
12	3	75	1	25	0	0
13	12	80	3	20	0	0
14	7	87	1	13	0	0
15	4	100	0	0	0	0
16	5	71	2	29	0	0
17	1	100	0	0	0	0
18	2	50	2	50	0	0
19	5	83	1	17	0	0
20	4	50	4	50	0	0
21	0	0	5	100	0	0
22	0	0	0	0	0	0
23	1	33	2	67	0	0
24	43	100	0	0	0	0
25	31	96	1	2	1	2
26	9	100	0	0	0	0
27	18	90	2	10	0	0
28	13	40	18	57	2	3
29	3	21	9	72	1	7
30	4	36	7	64	0	0
31	10	30	23	67	1	3
32	5	42	7	58	0	0
33	9	64	5	36	0	0
34	8	42	11	58	0	0
35	18	75	6	25	0	0

TABLE 2
CONTROVERSY BY STATE

Controversy	New Mexico		Arizona		Colorado		Utah		Wyoming		Idaho		Montana	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	31	62	81	97	60	46	13	72	18	80	11	31	12	42
No	18	36	2	2	66	51	5	28	3	12	25	69	15	54
No Response	1	2	1	1	3	3	0	0	2	8	0	0	1	4
Total	50	100	84	100	129	100	18	100	23	100	36	100	28	100

tenure are more likely to perceive controversy over faculty status than those with tenure. This marked dichotomy in response could be ascribed to a number of factors. Those without tenure are, ipso facto, confronted with problems that tenured faculty are not. Secondly, not only are untenured librarians forced to meet requirements no longer made of tenured faculty, but the requirements themselves

are now being more stringently applied at many institutions. Added to this is the perplexity that many beginning librarians may feel when encountering the polarization among other junior-level colleagues over this question. Conversely, many of the now-tenured library faculty achieved tenure under a "grandfather clause" and thus never faced a tenure-review process.

In contrast to the ACRL standards that

TABLE 3*
CONTROVERSY BY TENURED
AND UNTENURED FACULTY

Controversy	Tenured Faculty		Untenured Faculty	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	88	25.8	85	24.9
No	125	36.7	43	12.6
Total	213	62.5	+ 128	37.5 = 341; 100%

*Table 3 reflects the correlation for those 341 respondents who answered both question 1 (controversy) and question 20 (tenure status). The other 27 respondents are not represented.

call for academic-year contracts,³ 91.5 percent of the surveyed librarians reported that they hold twelve-month contracts (see table 4). This discrepancy points up another aspect of the controversy. Indeed, many respondents deem it patently unfair that librarians must meet the same scholarly or publishing requirements as teaching faculty when obliged to hold twelve-month contracts. A parallel situation is illustrated in table 5 that shows the hours per week that librarians must work. The overwhelming majority (94.57 percent) of librarians in the Rocky Mountain region work forty hours per week. One succinct comment expresses what many librarians do not like about faculty status: the condition of "trying to meet standards set by and for teaching faculty on a 12-month contract and on a rigid 40-hour per week schedule."

In this context, it is interesting to note

TABLE 4
LENGTH OF LIBRARIANS'
CONTRACT YEAR

Contract Year	#	%
12 months	337	91.5
10 months	7	2.0
9 months	23	6.2
No response	1	.3
Total	368	100.0

TABLE 5
LENGTH OF LIBRARIANS'
WORK WEEK

Work week	#	%
40 hours	348	94.57
37 hours	1	.27
35 hours	2	.54
30 hours	1	.27
Other	16	4.35
Total	368	100.00

that while our survey did not address the matter of librarians' salaries, the issue was nevertheless highlighted through numerous respondents' comments. Concern over salaries appears to be tied directly to the constraints imposed by the length of contract year and rigidly controlled work schedule as well as to the difficulty of meeting certain requirements (for example, publishing) under such conditions. It is worth speculating whether, if salaries were perceived to be more equitable between librarians and teaching faculty, these other perceived discrepancies would be diminished in librarians' eyes.

When asked whether their normal work loads include time for other activities such as committee work or attendance at conferences, 90 percent (328) indicated yes; 9 percent (36) no; and 1 percent (4) provided no response (see table 6). This overwhelmingly positive response may be deceptive, however, because many people commented that time spent on committee work may have to be made up later in order to complete routine work.

TABLE 6
OTHER ACTIVITIES INCLUDED
IN WORK SCHEDULE

Activities Allowed?	#	%
Yes	328	90
No	36	9
No Response	4	1
Total	368	100

When asked whether they are encouraged to serve on library and/or institutional committees (see table 7), 97 percent (355) responded affirmatively; 2 percent (10) negatively; and 1 percent (3) provided no response. Librarians' responses to the question about whether or not they are encouraged to serve on professional committees at the state, local, and regional level displayed a similar pattern (see table 8). The strongly affirmative response noted in tables 7 and 8 imply that committee service is considered important by administrators for tenure and promotion.

The question of whether or not librarians are subject to the same tenure provisions as teaching faculty provides a rea-

TABLE 7
ENCOURAGED TO WORK
ON LIBRARY AND/OR
INSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEES

Library/Institutional Committees?	#	%
Yes	355	97
No	10	2
No Response	3	1
Total	368	100

TABLE 8
ENCOURAGED TO SERVE ON
PROFESSIONAL COMMITTEES

Professional Committees?	#	%
Yes	343	94
No	21	5
No Response	4	1
Total	368	100

sonably uniform response across the region as a whole. Seventy percent (251) indicate that they are subject to identical provisions (see table 9). However, in examining the question of identical tenure provisions by state we observe a major difference in the region (table 10). For example, in New Mexico 87 percent (43) of the librarians replied that tenure requirements are identical, while in Arizona, at the opposite end of the continuum, only 7 percent (7) of the librarians stated that the requirements are the same. In our previous survey, by comparison, the Arizona directors (4) were evenly divided on the

TABLE 9
TENURE PROVISIONS IDENTICAL
TO TEACHING FACULTY'S

Identical Provisions	#	%
Yes	251	70
No	99	25
No Response	18	5
Total	368	100

same question while in New Mexico only 63 percent (5) of the directors agreed that tenure provisions are the same.

To those who responded that they were not governed by identical tenure provisions, we asked whether an equivalent provision was in effect. Sixty-seven percent (66) said no, and 33 percent (33) said yes. Therefore, sixty-six librarians may either not know what provisions govern them or work in institutions where there are no provisions for tenure. How can these librarians be said to have faculty status?

The question of publishing provides further evidence of disparity between the viewpoints of librarians and those of their directors. When librarians were asked whether or not they must publish to be granted tenure and promotion, 42 percent (156) responded affirmatively, 50 percent (184) responded negatively, and 8 percent (28) did not respond. These results contrast sharply with those from the earlier survey of library directors in which only 18 percent (7) indicated that librarians must publish in order to be promoted or granted tenure. Such diversity in response is difficult to explain, but it may stem from the directors' not being in close contact with their faculties or from the librarians' ignorance of what is required of them, or both. A number of respondents commented that publishing is necessary for promotion but not for tenure. This distinction would seem to contradict the assertion that tenure provisions are the same for the teaching and library faculties. The publishing issue elicited pointed comments from numerous librarians. It is thought—by many who chose to write comments—that the pressure to publish is unfair for faculty who work at least a forty-hour week for eleven months of the year.⁴

A final instance of divergence between

TABLE 10
IDENTICAL TENURE PROVISIONS BY STATE

Identical Provisions	New Mexico		Arizona		Colorado		Utah		Wyoming		Idaho		Montana	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	43	87	7	7	108	80	14	88	19	83	32	89	28	100
No	6	11	68	84	15	15	2	6	4	17	4	11	0	0
No Response	1	2	9	9	6	5	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	50	100	84	100	129	100	18	100	23	100	36	100	28	100

TABLE 11
PERCEPTION OF BENEFITS BY LIBRARIANS AND DIRECTORS

Benefit	Librarians	Directors	Librarians	Directors
	Yes	Yes	No	No
Peer review for tenure	93%	86%	7%	14%
Peer review for promotion	89	100	11	0
Eligibility for sabbaticals	85	100	15	0
Eligibility for research leaves	88.5	100	11.5	0
Eligibility for research funds	80	100	20	0
Access to grievance procedures	92	100	8	0
Organized faculty	77	86	23	14
Eligible for senate	95	100	5	0

librarians' perceptions and those of their directors emerges over the question of benefits of faculty status. Table 11 incorporates information from our previous study with answers from the present study. In every category but one, the percentage of library directors indicating that librarians enjoy a particular benefit exceeds the librarians' own response. Indeed, in six categories, 100 percent of the library directors responded that librarians enjoyed the corresponding benefit. Perhaps the directors were speaking theoretically whereas the librarians were answering from actual experience.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that in the Rocky Mountain region there is considerable controversy over faculty status for academic librarians. Such controversy appears, in its various dimensions, to stem principally from the different time commitments that exist for librarians as opposed to those of the teaching faculty. While the latter enjoy the benefit of nine-month contracts and more flexible work schedules in attempting to fulfill their faculty obligations, librarians, with few exceptions, do not. This discrepancy, felt all the more keenly in light of pronounced salary differences, has created a dubious attitude among academic librarians regarding faculty status and has led many to question the suitability and practical value of this system. In the words

of one respondent: "Faculty status does not always conform to the library environment and also alludes to an improper description of my work. Since I do not teach and have a twelve-month contract, people are often confused by the title. I think our titles should be changed to describe our work situation. However, I have certain reservations about a change because new titles may put us in a precarious situation whereby the opportunities which the library faculty are deserving of—tenure, sabbaticals, research leaves, etc.—may eventually be overlooked."

Moreover, the effects of the controversy appear to have spilled over into the ranks of the librarians and most sharply between the tenured and nontenured librarians. The survey also illustrates that clear differences of opinion and viewpoint exist between the librarians and their directors on different aspects of the controversy. Almost invariably the directors hold a more positive view of the benefits of faculty status for librarians than do the librarians themselves.

In the end, to have "queried the troops" is to have seen that—at least in the Rocky Mountain region—the issue is far from settled. On the contrary, it continues to be controversial. Nor is it surprising that this should be so; for if the library faculty are divided, is it any wonder that university administrators and others display a similar ambivalence?

REFERENCES

1. For another study examining librarians' opinions of faculty status see Prabha Sharma, "A Survey of Academic Librarians and Their Opinions Related to Nine-Month Contracts and Academic Status

Configurations in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi," *College & Research Libraries* 42:561-70 (Nov. 1981).

2. "Standards for Faculty Status for College and University Librarians," *College & Research Libraries News* 8:210-12 (Sept. 1972).
3. *Ibid.*, p.211. On the subject of the contract year, the ACRL standards specify, "Librarians should normally be appointed for the academic year. If a librarian is expected to work through the summer session, his salary scale should be adjusted similarly to the summer session scale of other faculty at his college or university."
4. For additional information on librarians and publishing, see Ronald Rayman and Frank Wm. Goudy, "Research and Publication Requirements in University Libraries," *College & Research Libraries* 41:43-48 (Jan. 1980); and Priscilla Geahigan and others, "Acceptability of Non-Library/Information Science Publications in the Promotion and Tenure of Academic Librarians," *College & Research Libraries* 42:571-75 (Nov. 1981).

APPENDIX A

We are interested in knowing the benefits for and expectations of academic librarians with faculty status. Please respond to the following questions and feel free to make comments on any of them. Thank you.

1. Is there controversy in your library or institution about faculty status for librarians? yes no
2. Do you hold a contract of nine months? ten months? twelve months?
3. If you hold a twelve-month contract, are nine- or ten-month contracts possible for you? yes no
4. Is your scheduled work week 30 hours? 35 hours? 37 hours? 40 hours? other?
5. Does your normal work load include time for other professional activities such as committee work? yes no
6. Are you, as a librarian, encouraged to serve on library and/or school committees? yes no
7. Are you, as a librarian, encouraged to serve on professional committees at the state, regional, and/or national level? yes no
8. Are you covered by tenure provisions identical to those of the teaching faculty? yes no
9. If the answer to #8 is "no," is there an equivalent provision made? yes no
10. Are recommendations for tenure, or its equivalent, based on a peer review system? yes no
11. Are you, as a librarian, eligible for promotion in rank? yes no
12. Are recommendations for promotion based on a peer review system? yes no
13. Are you, as a librarian, eligible for sabbatical leaves on the same basis as teaching faculty? yes no
14. Are you, as a librarian, eligible for research leaves with or without pay? yes no
15. Do you, as a librarian, have access to the same research funds that are accessible to teaching faculty? yes no
16. Do you have access to grievance, appeal, and review procedures available to teaching faculty? yes no
17. Must you publish to be granted promotion and tenure or their equivalent? yes no
18. Has a library faculty been formally organized and/or constituted? yes no
19. Are you, as a librarian, eligible for membership in the academic senate or equivalent faculty body? yes no
20. Are you tenured? Untenured?
21. During what year did you begin working as a librarian in your institution? _____
22. What is your rank? Instructor? Assistant Professor? Associate Professor? Professor? Other?
23. Which position describes yours? Assistant Director? Department Head? Functional Specialist? Librarian? Assistant Department Head?
24. Are you in Readers' Services? Technical Services? Collection Development? Administration?
25. Name of your institution? _____
26. What do you like about faculty status? _____
27. What don't you like about faculty status? _____

COMMENTS: _____