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Professional Duties in University Libraries

The recommended ratio of professional to nonprofessional staff members in university libraries varies from 50-50 to 33-67. Clear demarcation of the respective duties of each group is needed not only if faculty status is to be attained by the former but also in the interest of human economy. The universities of California, Illinois, and Michigan have done more than most to develop detailed job specifications Summaries of descriptive data are given from each of these three, and additional comments are drawn from other sources, including: position classification standards of the United States Civil Service Commission; a study made in 1948 by ALA; and other institutional practices. Educational preparation of librarians is discussed. Common to all professional assignments should be administrative authority, policy initiation, bibliographic expertise, specialized subject or linguistic background, or ability to plan new programs by library technology.

r is GENERALLY AGREED that library staffs should be composed of two categories of workers: (1) professional librarians performing duties of an educational and research nature, requiring professional training for competent performance; and (2) clerical and other nonprofessional or subprofessional personnel who will be responsible for more elementary, routine, and mechanical tasks. Considerable support exists among administrators for a further breakdown, *i.e.*, for three rather than two divisions: professional, subprofessional, and cler-

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The percentage of the staff that ought to be classified as professional or academic and the proportion clerical or nonacademic usually varies with the organization and size of the library. As a general rule, experts in administration believe, not more than one half of a university library staff should belong in the professional category, and a ratio frequently recommended is one-third professional and two-thirds clerical. Otherwise, it is probable that professional personnel will be performing clerical and subprofessional duties.

A recent investigation by Eugene D. Hart and William J. Griffith of the University of Southern California, based on a list of one hundred duties equally divided between professional and nonprofessional, concluded that "professional librarians are involved to a significant degree in the performance of nonprofessional duties." Several reasons were suggested for such situations.

- Library administrators and supervisors are often oblivious to the problem and to the true nature of professional library duties.
- 2. A general disregard commonly exists with respect to the assignment of nonprofessional duties to professional staff members.
- 3. Due to the general shortage of personnel in libraries a pyramiding effect of duties results, and work assignments are sometimes made to professional and nonprofessional staff members without regard to the nature of these assignments.

For university librarians the matter of definition of duties is of fundamental importance in the achievement and maintenance of academic or faculty status. An essential first step in gaining proper recognition of librarians as members of the academic staff is making a clear distinction and separation between professional and clerical duties in libraries. The most valid objection to the acceptance of librarians into academic circles is that in some libraries there are alleged to be too many routine, nonprofessional jobs carried on by "professional" staff members. The administrator can hardly defend as professional such assignments as checking in current periodicals, charging out books across a loan desk, filing catalog cards, typing orders, reading book shelves, keeping financial records, binding pamphlets, and all the other necessary but obviously subprofessional activities that go on in libraries.

As a corollary, since there are only so many working hours in a day, librarians who are required to spend a substantial portion of their time in performing clerical routines must neglect opportunities to make important and useful contributions of a professional character.

The separation in actual practice of the two types of duties becomes more feasible as the library increases in size. In small colleges it is not unusual to find only one full-time librarian—with no assistance other than part-time student workers—who is therefore compelled to do something of everything, even janitorial services. Any institution which can justify the title of university, however, will operate its library on a higher level.

Any absolute division between academic and nonacademic or between professional and clerical duties may in some instances be impracticable. Unquestionably there are certain tasks borderline in nature which can be as well done by the skilled nonprofessional as by the beginning professional. Nevertheless the characteristics of the two are sufficiently dissimilar to permit reasonably clear distinctions to be made. Much basic work has already been done in determining which library duties are professional and which are nonprofessional. The most detailed analysis was issued sixteen years ago by a subcommittee of the ALA Board on Personnel Administration, under the title Descriptive List of Professional and Nonprofessional Duties in Libraries (1948). Therein library activities are grouped under thirteen headings and professional and nonprofessional duties separated in each category. A few years later the California Library Association's Committee on Library Development, under the chairmanship of Edward A. Wight, made a significant contribution to the field with its report entitled Separation of Professional and Nonprofessional Work in Public Libraries (1952), much of which has relevance for other types of libraries.

The most recent comprehensive sur-

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vey and attempt to define kinds of responsibilities comes from England in a small book issued by the Library Association in 1962: Professional and Nonprofessional Duties in Libraries; a Descriptive List Compiled by a Subcommittee of the Membership Committee of the Library Association. The English study acknowledges extensive dependence upon the ALA list, but it takes into account later developments in library science as well as practices peculiar to Britain.

A number of other references bearing more or less directly upon the question of professionalism *vs.* nonprofessionalism in libraries are appended.

In connection with the present study university libraries in various regions of the country were asked to furnish job analyses or descriptions which might shed further light on the matter of definitions. For the most part, the results were meager; either no job analyses had been done or the descriptions were too brief and general to be of value. Among the institutions which have developed reasonably detailed specifications for the several levels of professional librarians are the University of California, the University of Michigan, and the University of Illinois. The organizational patterns are similar, each stating minimum qualifications as to education, experience, knowledge, and ability for all categories, from beginners with professional training but no experience, to advanced standards set for chief administrators. In general, no staff member is classified as professional without a college degree and a year of graduate study in an accredited library school, or equivalents.

For purposes of illustration and comparison, summaries of descriptive data for these three major university library systems follow:

1. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA. Since the University of California libraries achieved academic status in 1962, sections of the University Administrative Manual relating to libraries and librarians have been in process of revision and amendment. Currently under review are these criteria:

Librarian I: Entry professional level. Performs a variety of professional library work under direction. Service in this class would usually be for two or three years during which time careful supervision would be given in order that incumbents be prepared for more independent responsibility.

Librarian II: Full professional level. Performs difficult professional work with considerable independence, applying knowledge of library methods and often of a specialized subject field. May supervise nonprofessionals and/or serve in a team leader role over other professional librarians. Management and supervision, although they may be exercised, do not require the major portion of time.

Librarian III: Performs complex professional work and assumes responsibility for: (a) the administration of a moderately large department, branch, or unit; or (b) application of difficult analytical techniques to certain aspects of library operations; or (c) development and/or management of specialized collections involving selection of material, guidance in technical processing, interpretation of the collection, and provision of advanced reference service for users.

Librarian IV: Positions in this class are characterized by substantial independent responsibility and action. Incumbents have over-all responsibility, frequently assignable in only general terms for: (a) the administration of a large branch, large department, or a group of departments; or (b) application of difficult analytical techniques to a number of aspects of library operations, frequently working in great detail on a major element of activity; application of various technologies, machines, and systems to several aspects of library operations or one broad aspect in great detail; or (c) development and/or management of a subject collection, selectively developed, to at least the general research level; a group of subjects selectively developed jointly for an academic program; and exhaustive area, language, or subject collection with responsibility for complex problems in developing the collection.

Librarian V: Positions in this class are characterized by a very high degree of independent responsibility and action. Incumbents have over-all responsibility, usually assignable in very general terms for: (a) the administration of a very large and complex department, branch, unit, or group of departments; or (b) application of complex analytical techniques to major aspects of library operations and the development of new routines and services, using advanced techniques from business and industry as well as from librarianship; or (c) development and/or management of: an extensive collection in a major discipline, group of languages, or large geographical area; an extensive specialized collection involving several subject fields and containing material of primary interest to researchers; an exhaustive collection covering a broad subject or important segment of a subject.

Assistant University Librarian: Positions in this class provide administrative assistance to the university librarian. Incumbents are delegated responsibility for the work of groups of departments and for carrying out or directing work of general management, with authority to act within the limits of established policy. With the university librarian, they formulate new plans and policy and seek solutions to problems involving the whole library or major areas of the library.

2. UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN. At the

University of Michigan professional librarians have "equivalent" status rather than academic ranks or titles. As in California, there are five classifications or groupings below the top level of library administration. The distinguishing characteristics and typical tasks assigned to personnel of each class are set forth as follows:

Librarian I: This level constitutes the beginning professional level of librarianship and performance of professional duties. Includes elementary reference, cataloging or classification work, or performance of circulation or order routines requiring application of professional knowledge. Professional work performed is reviewed by supervisor for format, adequacy, compliance with instructions. Circulation and some service functions are performed independently but within a limited scope. Typical of such positions are: Performance of elementary referance work with work reviewed upon completion, and covering a well-defined subject matter field; descriptive cataloging of material involving few problems in establishment of entries; adapting printed Library of Congress catalog cards; revising filing performed by clerical workers; subject cataloging, with revision, of material in a limited subject matter field with no deviations from approved guidelines; performance of circulation and order routines involving supervision of clerical workers, with primary responsibility for professional functions. Administrative responsibility is not normally found at this level; performance of professional work in departmental libraries in which there is no final responsibility for library administration. Minimum qualifications: an AB or BS degree or the equivalent, and a graduate degree (fifth-year degree) in library science; in exceptional instances, specialized training and/or experience may be substituted for part or all of the educational requirements.

Librarian II: This level includes all positions the duties of which involve application of professional knowledge or experience in supervision and/or performance of difficult, responsible tasks. Bulk of duties are performed independently; professional duties are subject to review. however, and supervisor is available for consultation when necessary. Typical of such positions are: Supervision of professional duties of average difficulty performed by lower grade professional employees; performance of professional duties of a more difficult, technical nature; beginning level of responsibility for operation of a divisional library and providing of reference services therein and initial responsibility for book selection and acquisition functions; initial responsibility for book selection or processing in a centralized acquisitions organization, where professional decisions are required; performance of circulation or order routines of a supervisory or administrative nature with responsibility for a small group of professional or subprofessional employees. Minimum qualifications: graduate degree (fifth-year degree) in library science. In exceptional instances, specialized training and/or experience may be substituted for part or all of the educational requirements; two years of professional library experience, for part of which graduate study beyond-or other than-the fifthyear library degree may be substituted.

Librarian III: This level includes all positions the incumbents of which perform independently, professional duties of a very difficult nature; or supervise performance of technical duties of a moderately difficult nature; or perform administrative duties comparable in difficulty to professional duties above in a public service department of the library or divisional library; or serve as acting head of a large department, in the absence of the department head, in addition to carrying out regularly assigned duties at

the level of Librarian II. Typical of such positions are: unrevised descriptive cataloger of difficult material including scientific, serial, and foreign publications; subject cataloger of difficult material; principal administrative assistant to the head of a major department, with a definite assignment of specific administrative duties; supervisor of a divisional library of medium scope and complexity (size and scope of collection and nature of service demands are determinative). Qualifications: graduate degree (fifthyear degree) in library science. In exceptional instances, specialized training and/or experience may be substituted for part or all of the educational requirements; four years of professional library experience for part of which graduate study beyond-or other than-the fifthyear library degree may be substituted; administrative and supervisory experience, where appropriate.

Librarian IV: This level includes all positions, the duties of which are to supervise and/or perform the most difficult, professional work; or to serve as assistant head of a large department; or to perform administrative duties as acting head of a large department in addition to regularly assigned difficult technical duties; or to be assigned responsibility for a major divisional library. Incumbent performs work without immediate supervision, with responsibility for program planning, library administration, or acts in an advisory and staff capacity to supervisory and administrative officers. Typical of such positions are: supervisor and coordinator of difficult cataloging or classification; deputy head of a large department who may additionally perform difficult technical or reference duties; supervisor of a divisional library of large scope and complexity (size and scope of collection and nature of service demands are determinative); head of a small department who supervises work of a moderately difficult na-

ture performed by professional and clerical personnel, with responsibility for administrative functions inherent in such a position; independent performance of extremely difficult professional duties requiring specialized knowledge and/or experience. Qualifications: AB or BS degree or the equivalent; graduate degree (fifth-year degree) in library science. In exceptional instances, specialized training and/or experience may be substituted for part or all of the educational requirements; five years of professional library experience for part of which graduate study beyond-or other thanthe fifth-year library degree may be substituted; demonstrated administrative and supervisory ability where appropriate; subject specialization where appropriate.

Librarian V: This level includes all positions the duties of which are to supervise the activities of a department, usually through subordinate supervisors; includes responsibility for staffing and assigning duties; recommending establishment or major changes in policy and establishing procedures within well defined library regulations. Included are positions of a policy-making purpose, which may not involve direct supervision of a department, but whose authority and recommendations are of as responsible and influential a nature as those at the department head level. Also included are the supervisors of major divisional libraries who bear primary responsibility for adapting and developing the collections and services to the advanced research and instructional programs of the units served. Qualifications: AB or BS degree or the equivalent; graduate degree (fifth-year degree) in library science. In exceptional instances, specialized training and/or experience may be substituted for part or all of the educational requirements; five years of professional library experience for part of which graduate study beyond—or other than—the fifth-year library degree may be substituted; demonstrated administrative and supervisory ability where appropriate; subject specialization where appropriate, evidenced by a graduate degree in the subject field or the equivalent in training and/or experience.

In the UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS library, where the professional staff has had academic status since 1944, the grouping is similar, but by rank. The requirements as to education, experience, and personal qualifications are also closely analogous to those of the California and Michigan systems. The duties by level are described as follows:

Library Assistants. Perform routine professional duties in the technical or public service departments of the library under immediate supervision. In the technical departments may be assigned relatively difficult bibliographical problems requiring subject, bibliographic, or language specialization involved in the acquisition and cataloging of library materials. In the public service departments may give reference service to students and faculty, compile bibliographies, give special instruction and assistance in the use of the card catalog and special indexes and assist in book selection. In some areas may supervise clerks or student assistants.

Librarians with Rank of Instructor. Given more difficult assignments in the acquisition and cataloging of new library materials; may assist in the training and supervision of new professional, clerical, or student assistants; offer formal or informal instruction in the use of the library; assist with interlibrary loans and give reference service involving difficult bibliographical problems which require subject, bibliographic, or language specialization and the use of unusual library sources and a knowledge of the general library resources. May be in charge of smaller departmental libraries or special reading rooms, assuming responsibility for reference work in special subject fields, selection and acquisition of books, periodicals, and other materials, assisting faculty and students in their class work and individual research problems, and training and supervision of their professional, clerical or student assistants.

Librarians with Rank of Assistant Professor. Under general administrative direction have considerable latitude for the exercise of individual judgment in their positions; may have substantial responsibility in the technical departments or may be in charge of departmental libraries or assistant heads of departments or departmental libraries; may act as consultants or cooperate with nationwide library agencies on policies of bibliographical sources and form; give lectures or conduct courses in bibliography and reference as part of the curriculum of a university department or the library school; if in charge of college or departmental libraries, they may serve on the college or departmental library committee and attend faculty meetings, and must be familiar with the educational policies and objectives of their college or department and alert to curriculum changes in order to provide necessary library materials; have responsibility for reference or research work in their areas and assist faculty and graduate students with their research problems; through their knowledge of acquisition problems, book markets, publishers, resources of learned societies and scientific institutions and organizations, assist in developing library resources; usually active in national and state library organizations and other educational associations.

Librarians with Rank of Associate Professor or Professor. In this group are the dean of library administration, the asso-

ciate directors for the public and technical services, the assistant director of the public service departments, the personnel librarian, the librarians of the medical center library and undergraduate library in Chicago, the library administrative assistant, the department heads (acquisition, cataloging, circulation, reference, and serials), and librarians of the large college and departmental libraries. The department heads and departmental librarians have responsibilities comparable to those in the preceding rank. The personnel librarian is responsible, with the advice and approval of the dean and two associate directors, for securing all library personnel -professional, clerical, and student-and formulating and administering personnel policies. The dean is responsible to the president of the university for the operation of the library and coordinating its services with the educational program of the university. The associate directors, through their department heads. are responsible for the work of their divisions; they advise with the dean on problems of general library policies, and the preparation of budgets.

For comparative purposes, it may be useful to outline the characteristic duties and responsibilities of three grades of library clerks in the University of Illinois library, listed as follows:

Library Clerk II. Assist in routine circulation and reading room services; give out information as authorized; prepare basic library records; do routine checking of records, catalogs, and trade bibliographies; receive, record, and route new acquisitions; make simple changes or additions in catalog and other records; do library filing; keep statistical records; handle mail and routine correspondence; repair books; prepare materials for binding; assist in book inventory; supervise student assistants.

Library Clerk III. Be responsible for the

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efficient performance of clerical duties in a division of the library as assigned; assist in circulation and reading room services; give out information as authorized; do searching in library records and bibliographic tools; supervise the recording and routing of the routine types of new acquisitions; do library filing, revise certain types of filing, and make additions or changes in library records: prepare statistical and time records: assist in book inventory: care for and issue supplies; train and direct clerical and student personnel; handle mail and routine correspondence; repair books; prepare materials for binding.

Chief Library Clerk. Under general supervision, is responsible for the efficient clerical operation of a principal administrative library unit, including the performance of clerical library personnel, interpretation of library records to staff and faculty, routine bibliographical checking, keeping statistical records, and performing related duties as assigned.

A number of additional university libraries have drawn up job descriptions of the nature of those presented from California, Michigan, and Illinois; *e.g.*, Ohio State, Oregon State System of Higher Education, University of Texas, Florida State University, and Washington State University. The three series cited, however, are representative.

A claim frequently made in support of academic or faculty status for professional librarians is that librarians are teachers, formally or informally. A report prepared by the City University of New York Libraries Staff Association analyzed this claim in a document entitled "Librarians are Teachers." The report concluded, in summary:

The instruction performed by librarians of the City Colleges is both classroom teaching and extra-classroom teaching. For convenience this activity may be grouped into

the following categories: (1) lectures on the use of the library and library research tools, given to students of all levels in visits to classrooms; (2) lecture-demonstrations to particular groups in the library, at the request of colleagues on the faculty; (3) the preparation of teaching aids, supplementary to textbooks-such as annotated reading lists and guides to particular kinds of materials in the library; (4) the preparation of visual aids, supplementary to classroom lecture-such as films, tape recordings and displays; (5) individual conferences with advanced students on their problems with term papers, honors papers, and theses; (6) education of prospective librarians; (7) participation in teaching programs, such as general studies, adult education, in addition to regular professional work.

Professional librarians in other college and university libraries are of course performing similar teaching functions.

The ALA Board on Personnel Administration's *Descriptive List of Professional and Nonprofessional Duties in Libraries*, previously referred to, describes professional and nonprofessional duties under the following main headings:

Administration Personnel Management Self-Development of Staff Public Relations Selection of Material Acquisition of Material Cataloging and Classification Mechanical Preparation of Material Registration and Circulation Reference Work Assistance to Readers Physical Upkeep of Material Care of Shelves and Files

Each category is shown to have both professional and nonprofessional aspects, with the professional perhaps predominating in some and the clerical in others. The list is presumably applicable to all types of libraries, and there is no attempt to separate duties peculiar to a university library, for example, from the activities in public, school, or college libraries. There would be some value, perhaps, in trying to pull out of the general list those to be found only, or mainly, in university libraries and to add items which may have developed more recently or were overlooked by the ALA committee sixteen years ago. The differences may not be substantial enough to justify the time and effort involved in developing a more specialized list, however, in view of the fact that professional work in all major types of libraries everywhere exhibits the same general characteristics.

For example, and again for purposes of comparison, the detailed position classification standards developed by the United States Civil Service Commission characterize the recognized grades or classes of professional librarians in federal government service as follows:

Librarian GS-5: These classes include positions of (1) librarians receiving training for positions at higher grade levels; and (2) librarians performing assignments of limited difficulty and responsibility.

Librarian GS-7: These classes include positions the duties of which are to perform work of moderate difficulty or limited scope in general library work, library administration, or a special functional or subject-matter area.

Librarian GS-9: These classes include positions of (1) librarians in charge of libraries having a limited special subject collection; (2) librarians in charge of libraries having a range of functions which may include extension service; (3) librarians in charge of administrative units for special types of services or functions, including the performance of library work that is complex and difficult; and (4) librarians performing complex and difficult work involving acquisitions, cataloging, reference, or other library functions.

Librarian GS-11: These classes include positions of (1) librarians in charge of libraries that are separate administrative units and have a range of services and functions, which may include extension service; (2) librarians in charge of administrative subdivisions of a library where the functions and services are such as to require a substantial amount of work of the GS-9 level of difficulty and complexity; (3) librarians performing broad assignments for staff development and administration within an area of a library system; or (4) librarians performing expert work involving acquisitions, cataloging, reference, or other library function.

Librarian GS-12: These classes include positions of librarians having (1) overall supervision for an extensive library or group of libraries; (2) responsibility for directing a library program within an area such as an Army or regional area, with responsibility for integrating the program with that of the parent organization; or (3) nonsupervisory assignments of exceptional difficulty and complexity.

Librarian GS-13: These classes include positions having (1) over-all supervision for an extensive library or group of libraries containing general material as well as specialized technical or scientific collections; and (2) responsibility for coordinating an extensive library system containing general material and technical or scientific material.

EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION

In addition to the nature of duties assigned a major element in the classification of library workers as professional or nonprofessional is educational preparation. This is a cloudy area, seriously in need of established standards. A speci-

fication frequently stated for a professional appointment at any level is a graduate degree from an ALA accredited library school, yet there are hundreds of nonaccredited programs of library education in American colleges and universities, graduate and undergraduate. What is the status of their alumni? An increasing number of British and other librarians trained abroad are being appointed to positions in the United States. Where do they fit in the professional hierarchy? If an advanced academic degree is a requirement for a position, how is a PhD in library science equated, say, with a doctor's degree in Germanic languages?

Rather than trying to resolve such issues or questions, specifications often fall back on the ambiguous phrase "or equivalent." Clearly, definitions of what is meant by equivalents are needed, if the term professional as applied to librarians is to have any significance. Undoubtedly modern librarianship has become complex, making demands for specialists in a variety of fields for which no one type of educational preparation provides a satisfactory answer. Thus sets of standards should be developed to serve different purposes and recognizing different requirements.

Insofar as the present study is concerned, it must be conceded that there has been little effort to identify explicitly criteria that might be applied to determine whether a given duty is professional or nonprofessional. The determination has been largely in terms of illustrative descriptions of typical positions at the several levels actually in use in three university library systems—California, Illinois, and Michigan—and in the United States Civil Service.

This pragmatic approach has advantages, but a more objective statement would perhaps be of greater usefulness for general application. If we analyze for this purpose the criteria developed

by California, Illinois, Michigan, the United States Civil Service Commission, and other organizations concerned with library standards, certain common elements begin to emerge. We find, for example, that a professional position could be defined as one in which mature judgment is required, or in which the incumbent is assigned certain types of administrative authority and responsibility, or is expected to initiate and develop policy, or is expected to possess a thorough acquaintance with the bibliographic apparatus of research libraries, or may need a highly specialized subject or linguistic background, or may be called upon to plan new programs in library technology. These illustrative criteria could be considerably extended to help determine the earmarks of the professional librarian as distinguished from the nonprofessional or subprofessional worker in libraries.

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As for the first of these, this reviewer is frankly skeptical. After seven hours of lowlevel communication in one of the 123 discussion groups, he voted vehemently against all recommendations requiring further communication among librarians or between them and others. Perhaps his was an atypical group, or perhaps he is a misanthrope: other participants reported more fruitful experiences. As for the publicity objective, it is possible that the CWC contributed something to the national library legislative victories which followed within six months. Its success, however, will rest ultimately upon substantive results directly related to the student use problem. The ten major recommendations coming out of the conference have been referred into the ALA structure, and President Wagman reported recently that "many are well on the way to implementation." So far the most tangible result is another conference, scheduled for March 1965, with representatives of other national organizations .- Clifton Brock, University of North Carolina.

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ucational development should have been one of the subjects for discussion at this conference.

4. The development of educational programs in Africa requires the establishment of a network of supporting regional, national, and international libraries to provide the necessary information services dealing with the problems of African education.