

Recruiting Non-MLIS Graduate Students to Academic Librarianship

Sean Patrick Knowlton and Becky Imamoto

In response to declining numbers of qualified applicants nationwide for librarian positions in academic libraries, the University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries, in collaboration with the University's Graduate Teacher Program, has developed a fellowship program that encourages graduate students with advanced subject or language expertise to consider careers in academic librarianship. In spring 2005, the libraries paired the first Provost's Fellows with library faculty mentors. This article details the program and collaboration between the libraries and the Graduate Teacher Program and issues a call for similar programs to be established at other academic libraries.



Recruiting qualified academic librarians with advanced subject knowledge is a difficult task. In November of 2002, the Association of College & Research Libraries' (ACRL) Focus on the Future Task Force identified recruitment, education, and retention of librarians as core issues facing academic libraries.¹ Fewer qualified individuals are seeking positions in academic libraries, which has led to shallower pools of applicants with advanced subject skills.² Moreover, many academic libraries are also increasingly having difficulty recruiting librarians who possess the foreign language expertise that academic institutions seek.³

In 2002, ACRL's Ad Hoc Task Force on Recruitment & Retention Issues called on individual academic libraries to actively participate in recruitment to the profession efforts on their own campuses. They asked for these institutions to introduce

librarianship as a career option to all young people, from elementary through graduate school students. Moreover, they suggested that individual academic libraries "support, foster, and develop internship and librarian-in-resident or residency or fellowship-type programs that encourage LIS graduates to work in academic libraries and on special projects in academic libraries."⁴

Slightly modifying these suggested strategies to best fit the institution, the University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries (CU-Boulder Libraries) and the campus' Graduate Teacher Program (GTP) developed a fellowship program to encourage graduate students with advanced subject and/or language expertise to consider academic librarianship as a career. The first round of the Provost's Fellowship began in January 2005, pairing five outstanding graduate students with library faculty mentors. This article de-

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tails the origin and nature of the program, the collaboration between CU-Boulder Libraries and the GTP, and outcomes of the first round of the fellowship. It also calls for similar programs to be established at other academic libraries.

Literature Review

Scholarly literature on fellowship and internship opportunities in academic libraries for non-MLIS graduate students overwhelmingly centers on the recruitment and training of these individuals as student workers. The goal of many of these programs is to improve the quality of service at times when librarians themselves cannot staff a service desk.⁵ At the University of Arkansas Libraries, for example, the graduate assistant program aims to provide peer-learning opportunities for patrons through reference interactions with student workers who possess advanced subject knowledge.⁶ At the University of New Mexico, the first priority is to employ graduate students to address staffing and service needs in the humanities and social sciences. While they do also use the experience to introduce Ph.D. students entering a difficult job market to consider academic librarianship as a career option, this aspect is of secondary concern.⁷ These and other such programs are not primarily developed as recruitment to the profession opportunities.

Although there are many specific initiatives to recruit qualified people to careers in academic libraries, they overwhelmingly focus on opportunities for current MLIS students or recent graduates of schools of library and information science. Residency programs, for example, seek to bolster the professional skills of these individuals to better ensure their success in academic libraries. Many institutions also use this model to recruit for diversity at their library or the profession in general. Nevertheless, these programs do not especially target those who have already earned advanced degrees in another academic subject.

The Association of Research Libraries Academy is a notable and recent exception. Supported by an Institute of Museum and Libraries Services grant, the ARL Academy seeks to increase the exposure of current MLIS students who have advanced subject expertise to careers in academic research libraries. Among other benefits, the ARL Academy fellows receive mentored work experience in an ARL library over the course of a semester to foster their "exposure, competence and marketability" when seeking post-graduation employment in an academic and research library.⁸ Currently, three institutions participate in the program. Although the ARL Academy shows early promise in its goal of educating and preparing academic librarians, it does not seek to recruit to the profession of academic librarianship those individuals not already attending a school of library and information science.

Another approach to increasing the pool of subject experts in academic libraries involves the recruitment of current graduate students seeking a Ph.D. or those who have recently earned one but do not possess an MLIS. Yale University Library, for example, offers a paid semester-long Graduate Internship designed "to encourage Yale graduate students to consider the rewarding possibilities of a future career in academic libraries" and is only open to those who have completed their Ph.D. coursework.⁹ Another program, the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) Postdoctoral Fellowship, was created to "establish a new kind of scholarly information professional."¹⁰ These fellowships place humanities scholars at an academic research library for a period of one to two years so that they may be "positioned to pursue new career paths in the academy and to find challenging positions in campus libraries and research institutions."¹¹ The library literature reflects some concern among librarians that programs of this nature sidestep and devalue an accredited MLIS degree while acknowledging that others

embrace these initiatives as a means of recruiting subject specialists.¹²

The literature reflects a common concern in the field for identifying, recruiting, and preparing future academic librarians. Yet there is no systematic or widespread means for recruiting individuals with advanced subject knowledge to attend schools of library and information science with the goal of becoming academic librarians. The fellowship program highlighted in this article is an attempt to do just that and, perhaps, serve as a recruitment to the profession model for academic libraries nationwide. The ARL Academy shows that a dedicated mentorship experience can prepare highly qualified future academic librarians. The fellowship program at CU-Boulder Libraries offers non-MLIS students an earlier opportunity to explore the profession long before they have made career decisions.

Development of the Fellowship

As a response to ACRL's 2002 call for academic libraries to actively participate in recruitment to the profession efforts, James F. Williams, II, Dean of CU-Boulder Libraries, created a library task force in November 2002. Since its inception, the Ad Hoc Task Force on Recruitment to the Profession of Academic Librarianship has promoted academic librarianship as a career through presentations and an exhibit displayed at the CU-Boulder Libraries' coffee shop. As a result of task force communication with schools of library and information science across the country, CU-Boulder Libraries has also served as host site for several volunteer MLIS student interns.

Despite identifying the creation of a fellowship or internship opportunity as a goal early in the work of the task force, the momentum behind the Provost's Fellowship occurred quite unexpectedly. Charlene Kellsey, a task force member, published an article on the need for foreign language expertise in research libraries.¹³ In the article, Kellsey references an ACRL white paper that suggests partnering with "academic

departments to encourage undergraduate and graduate students in targeted majors to consider librarianship as a potential career" through work-study, internships, or practica.¹⁴ Fortunately, Laura Border, the Director of the Graduate Teacher Program (GTP) at CU-Boulder, was intrigued by the article and contacted Kellsey. Border saw the potential for the GTP to work with the libraries to reach and encourage graduate students to consider academic librarianship as a career. The GTP, a division of the Graduate School, was created to "help graduate students and post-docs perform effectively as graduate teaching assistants and graduate part-time instructors in classes, recitations, and labs and to assist them in their professional development as the professoriate of the future."¹⁵

At Border's request, two task force members presented a workshop/seminar on librarianship as an academic career option for graduate students studying foreign languages and literature. Border reasoned: "[S]ome graduate students at the MA level are not sure what to do with their foreign language training and are not sure if they want to pursue a doctorate. Doing a library science degree is an opportunity for them to pursue an academic faculty track that is different from the regular faculty track, but allows them to remain in an academic environment, carry out research, and have very satisfying careers."¹⁶ Task force members Charlene Kellsey, the Bibliographer for Classics, and Sean Knowlton, the Bibliographer for Spanish and Portuguese, discussed how they apply their foreign language skills and non-MLIS advanced degrees in their work as tenure stream faculty in CU-Boulder Libraries. The interest generated by this presentation directly led to the development of the Provost's Fellowship.

Nature and Goals of the Fellowship

The fellowship program's goals are straightforward: 1) introduce academic librarianship as a career to graduate students; 2) present to them the tenure process at CU-

Boulder Libraries; and 3) recruit fellows with subject and/or language expertise to the academic library profession.

The task force decided to focus recruitment to the profession efforts on graduate students already on campus, especially those at the master's level. The consensus among task force members is that students with master's degrees possess expertise in an academic discipline and are more familiar with research methodologies and tools than undergraduates. Furthermore, the task force feels that, on the whole, students at the master's level are more likely than Ph.D. candidates to enroll in a school of library and information science upon completion of their current program. The master's degree is seldom the terminal degree in many academic disciplines. As such, employment opportunities are often more limited. Finally, given the considerable time commitment required to obtain a Ph.D., the task force feels that fewer Ph.D. candidates will consider extending their already lengthy education by seeking another degree.

The fellowship parallels the site visit and faculty mentorship concept of the Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) program, a national initiative in which the GTP participates. The PFF is an endeavor of the Council of Graduate Schools that seeks to better prepare graduate students for an academic career during their doctoral programs. Students in the initiative strengthen their understanding of faculty roles with "opportunities to observe and experience faculty responsibilities."¹⁷ To this end, students complete projects that help educate them about "teaching and learning, the professoriate, the variety of institutions in which faculty work, and the skills required in their work."¹⁸ Like the Professional Development Certification program of the GTP, the time commitment for Provost's Fellows is 150 hours over the course of a semester. This gives fellows adequate time for the training needed and to experience in depth how an academic library functions.

Funding

Identifying funding for this program was, naturally, a major concern. The collaborators brainstormed ideas that included seeking funding from the Graduate School, Friends of the Library, campus administration, or via a grant. Laura Border of the GTP presented the idea to the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and solicited funding. The Provost agreed that library recruitment was an important issue and that this fellowship would be beneficial to CU-Boulder graduate students. In the end, he provided funds for five fellows over the course of one year. Each fellow would receive "\$2500 to support their work with a faculty mentor in the libraries and to provide them with the opportunity to expand their understanding and appreciation of library faculty careers in postsecondary institutions."¹⁹ In response to this generous offer, the program was inaugurated as the Provost's Fellowship.

Volunteer Library Faculty Mentors

The task force presented the fellowship to library faculty and issued a call for volunteers to act as mentors. Eight faculty members, seven with bibliographic responsibilities and/or language expertise, from a wide selection of departments/areas, volunteered to host a fellow. Faculty volunteers, therefore, were able to offer potential fellows mentorship opportunities in the following areas:

- Art and Architecture
- Cataloging (English/German), Classics
- Earth Sciences and Maps
- Preservation
- Reference and Instruction, Philosophy, and Linguistics
 - Reference and Instruction; Spanish, Portuguese and Comparative Literature
 - Special Collections, Italian Language and Literature

Advertising and Informational Meeting

Because recruitment was expected to be a challenge, advertising the Provost's Fel-

lowship was a high priority. The task force created an informational Web page, with details on the specific mentoring opportunities available, linked prominently from the libraries' homepage.²⁰ A colorful flyer was posted in the CU-Boulder Libraries and in departments that offer graduate degrees. Task force members informed graduate student advisors of the fellowship and enlisted their help in encouraging students to apply. Additionally, all CU-Boulder students received an announcement via the Buff Bulletin, the CU-Boulder email message service. Finally, in conjunction with the CU-Boulder Libraries Campus Relations Office, the task force designed

a library exhibit prominently displayed next to the library's coffee shop, a high traffic area. Entitled "What can you do with X degree? Have you considered librarianship?," the exhibit contrasted photographs of librarians from the past (obtained from the CU Archives) with those of current, diverse CU librarians. Short descriptions of their responsibilities, along with quotes about libraries and librarians, accompanied the photographs. The advertising culminated with an optional informational meeting for interested graduate students in which 15 candidates attended. The Dean of the CU-Boulder Libraries welcomed the students and introduced the program while Laura Border of the GTP clarified the application process and explained the GTP requirements. After each prospective mentor briefly described his or her duties, students asked questions and met individually with their potential faculty mentors.

The Candidates

Candidates supplied letters of interest in which they specified their career goals and, optionally, stated a preference for placement with one of the faculty mentor

TABLE 1
Fellowship Applicants by Department

| Department | # of Applicants | Percentage |
|--|-----------------|------------|
| SOCIAL SCIENCES | 7 | 37% |
| Design and Planning | 1 | 5% |
| History | 3 | 16% |
| Museum & Field Studies | 3 | 16% |
| ARTS & HUMANITIES | 11 | 58% |
| Classics | 2 | 11% |
| Comparative Literature | 1 | 5% |
| English | 3 | 16% |
| Germanic & Slavic Languages and Literature | 1 | 5% |
| Linguistics | 4 | 21% |
| SCIENCES | 1 | 5% |
| Physical Geography | 1 | 5% |

volunteers. Along with a current résumé or curriculum vita, candidates provided transcripts, signed letters of approval from their advisors, and records of any past GTP activities. Nineteen students applied for the first five fellowships: 14 women and 5 men. The 2004–2005 Statistical Abstract of the United States identifies that women comprise 84.4 percent of librarians; therefore, the higher number of female applicants was expected.²¹ Thirteen were master's students while 6 were Ph.D. candidates. This ratio reflects the task force's initial assumption that interest among master's students would be greater, although more Ph.D. students applied than expected. The highest percentage of applicants, 58 percent, came from the arts and humanities. This information might be helpful to libraries planning recruitment efforts at their own institutions; however, the applicant pool also is a reflection of the mentorship opportunities available during this first round of the fellowship. A breakdown of applicants by department follows in the chart below.

Seven candidates explicitly requested to work in Special Collections, while Reference and Instructional Services

was a close second with six candidates expressing a preference. Two sought to work in Earth Sciences and Maps, while Cataloging, Preservation, Art and Architecture, and Collection Development each received one applicant. Only one candidate did not articulate a preference. The task force attributes the large size of the candidate pool to a combination of its aggressive advertising efforts and its ability to offer a variety of mentorship opportunities and departments within the libraries in which to complete the fellowship.

Selection of the Provost's Fellows

Members of the task force and the faculty mentor volunteers reviewed the applications. They based their selections on the applicants' expressed interest in pursuing academic librarianship, their possibility of success, their academic record, commitment to personal and professional development, and compatibility with the faculty mentor. Based on these criteria, the task force selected five master's students to serve as Provost's Fellows in the following areas of CU-Boulder Libraries: Art & Architecture, Cataloging, Reference and Instructional Services (2), and Special Collections. No Ph.D. students were chosen, primarily due to their lack of expressed interest in academic librarianship as a career option. Instead, many of these applicants sought the fellowship as a means of improving themselves as teaching faculty or researchers. This first round of Provost's Fellows represented the following academic departments: Classics, Comparative Literature and Humanities, English, Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures, and History. They additionally brought expertise in spoken and written German (two fellows) and Russian, as well as reading knowledge of Greek, Latin, Spanish, and Swedish.

Provost's Fellows' Experiences

Each fellow and faculty mentor met in January 2005 to develop a Mentorship Plan and begin the fellowship. This

GTP form outlined the fellow's unique schedule, interests, and project goals. All fellows participated in group activities throughout the semester, as well as library functions such as department and faculty/staff meetings. At the end of the semester, fellows completed a narrative of their experiences and documented their projects for the GTP.

Group Activities

As one of their first activities, fellows received an in-depth orientation of the library to supply them with a clear idea of the division of tasks and library organization. The fellows met with several librarians and learned of their job responsibilities. Later, fellows learned of storage issues in academic libraries through a tour of the Colorado academic libraries' high-efficiency storage facility. Toward the end of the semester, the Tenure Committee of CU-Boulder Libraries gave fellows the opportunity to learn more about the tenure requirements for CU-Boulder librarians.

Attendance at Library Functions

Faculty mentors encouraged fellows to participate in faculty and staff activities as their schedules allowed. Fellows noted that attending meetings helped enlighten them on how an academic library functions. Additionally, during spring 2005, the CU-Boulder Libraries interviewed candidates for three faculty positions. As their schedules allowed, fellows attended the candidates' public presentations, which afforded them a unique view of the hiring process and clarified the rigorous standards for faculty of the CU-Boulder Libraries.

GTP Forum

As a condition of the fellowship, the GTP required fellows to attend the Colorado Preparing Future Faculty Network Forum. This six-hour PFF forum involves faculty and students from across Colorado. As part of the day's events, each Provost Fellow presented for 5–10 minutes on their individual experience in the library.

Projects & Duties

As demonstrated in the literature review, non-MLIS graduate student workers in academic libraries generally do not receive in-depth training on academic librarianship. As this was the explicit goal of the fellowship, faculty mentors took great care and time to provide fellows with the necessary background to approach their tasks knowledgeably. Most important, mentors took special consideration to incorporate the fellows' subject and/or language expertise into their tasks and projects.

The Art and Architecture fellow, a master's candidate in Classics, worked two hours a week on the reference desk under supervision from faculty and staff. She assisted with the planning and teaching of library instruction in art, made recommendations for purchasing from the approval plan, created a collection development policy for the special Art and Architecture collection, and made transfer decisions based on that policy.

In Cataloging, the fellow's expertise in Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literature allowed her to provide subject headings and classification numbers for German books in the backlog, as well as for some in Swedish and Norwegian. She analyzed the content of the book, input the information into OCLC, and exported and completed the records into the Libraries OPAC. She also contributed to cataloging a small collection of books in Special Collections by German author Ernst Junger.

One of the fellows in the Reference and Instructional Services Department was a master's candidate in English with extensive experience in instruction. During her fellowship, she assisted library patrons at the reference desk two hours a week under supervision of faculty and staff, team-taught library instruction seminars, assisted in the selection of materials for offsite storage and in purchasing materials, and used her subject expertise to create annotated subject guides for linguistics and classics using standard

bibliographies in the field and extensive research on sources.

The second fellow in the Reference and Instructional Services Department worked primarily in collection development. She searched holdings and assisted in selecting materials for Russian, Spanish, and Arabic. The fellow, a student of Russian history, also used her knowledge of Russian to create an online bibliography/finding guide for English-language translations of Russian folktales/fairy tales found in Special Collections. She also served library patrons at the reference desk two hours a week under supervision of faculty and staff and team-taught library instruction seminars.

The fellow in Special Collections performed a variety of duties. A student of Comparative Literature with language expertise in German, she conducted preservation work and developed finding aids for two collections. Working with a University of Denver MLIS intern, the fellow provided bibliographic instruction to two CU-Boulder classes and visiting fourth-graders. Most significantly, she used her German language skills to create bibliographies on materials related to the Holocaust and to the Protestant Reformation.

Faculty Mentors

The dedication of the volunteer faculty mentor was crucial to the success of the fellowship. As the explicit purpose of the fellowship is to expand fellows' understanding and appreciation of a career in an academic library, mentors sought to share their knowledge and enthusiasm for the profession. Instead of being project driven, mentors placed fellows' learning opportunities and interests over those tasks that might immediately assist the mentor with his or her workload. Naturally, this approach required a considerable time commitment on part of the mentor, especially during the initial stages of the fellowship. For all mentors, much of this preliminary time involved providing insight into his or her position and du-

ties, sharing knowledge of the realities of the academic library, and discussing relevant library literature. One mentor reported that these discussions proved to be most beneficial as they required her to think critically and question her everyday activities as a librarian. She commented that these exercises helped keep her mind fresh when explaining her rationale in response to the fellow's inquiries.

With the appropriate initial instruction and training, all fellows soon became independent and handled tasks and projects with little assistance. More important, they understood the reasons behind the task and the appropriate means of completing it. At this point, the mentors' roles became that of supervisor. Most mentors reported that, as their fellows neared completion of the 150 contact hours, dialogue increased heavily as the fellows, encouraged by their experiences, wished to discuss issues relating to schools of library and information science and career options in academic librarianship.

Evaluation of the Provost's Fellowship

Upon conclusion, each fellow completed a detailed evaluative summary of the fellowship and submitted a seven-question exit survey to the GTP. Faculty mentors, in turn, wrote a narrative evaluation of their fellow, which was also submitted to the GTP. As part of this postfellowship evaluation, each fellow reflected on her or his mentor's role. All expressed gratitude for the attention given in providing background information and answering questions. In the words of one fellow: "My mentor provided me with an appropriate balance of guidance, support, and independence." Another fellow wrote that her mentor was "great at taking the time to explain things and processes in detail" and shared "thought processes when confronting new issues or situations." Most expressed contentment with the level of freedom the fellowship offered in providing opportunities for exploration of the different aspects of the

profession. For one, the experience was "life-changing."

Fellows expressed that, before their experience, they did not fully understand the duties of academic librarians and were not aware of the faculty status of librarians at their own institution. Happily, after completing the fellowship, fellows articulated new perspectives. According to one, "I've come to understand the role of librarians in educating users." Another reported, "I didn't realize how many specialized jobs there were for librarians.... I didn't know they were so involved in so many different activities and that there were so many with their own specialties." One succinctly wrote, "An academic library is a rather upbeat place to work."

Fellows also provided suggestions on ways to improve the experience. As many mentors attended the ALA Midwinter Meeting during the second week of the fellowship, both mentors and fellows noted the beginning of the fellowship was somewhat rocky. In the words of one fellow, "Right after you begin learning about the library, your mentor leaves and you are unsure of what to do while they are away." Fellows also expressed interest in learning more about the other fellows' daily experiences. With the exception of the two in the Reference and Instructional Services Department, most did not often interact among themselves. Therefore, in the next round of the Provost's Fellowship in fall 2005, fellows will experience "A Day in the Life of a Fellow," during which time they will shadow other fellows to further explore their career options. Finally, one expressed frustration with her inability to adequately assist all patrons with their reference questions. The task force believes this reflects positively on the challenging nature of reference services and the need for the additional education that a MLIS degree and experience provide.

When asked for any additional comments, all expressed gratitude for the chance to investigate the profession. In the words of one fellow: "I think this fellowship was an especially useful recruiting

tool. For me this was mainly because it allowed me to talk with other librarians about what they do and why they like it and how they use their specializations. It gave me confidence that I could use my subject and language skills as a librarian and this was something that I was not sure about before the fellowship."

In all, positive comments vastly outweighed any criticism of their experiences. Indeed, all five Provost's Fellows answered "yes" when asked whether they were considering academic librarianship as a career option. One has already begun a distance learning program and two more have applied to schools of library and information science.

Conclusion

All faculty mentors unanimously endorsed the work and professionalism of their respective fellows and, in turn, the fellows rated their experiences highly. The task force and the fellows themselves have deemed the program a success in meeting

its goals. Students gained understanding and appreciation for academic librarianship as a career option, familiarized themselves with the concept of tenure for librarians, and saw ways in which to incorporate their subject and language expertise. All five Provost's Fellows completed the program and are considering academic librarianship as a career. One has already enrolled in a school of library and information science. More important, they are sharing their newfound enthusiasm for the profession with their peers.

This fellowship would not have succeeded without the integral assistance and experience of the GTP and the funding from the Provost. Currently, faculty mentors are working with the second round of fellows, and the task force is preparing for the third round scheduled to begin January, 2007. It is our hope and belief that the success of this fellowship program may serve as a model for similar recruitment to the profession efforts at other academic libraries nationwide.

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