Who Publishes in Top-Tier Library Science Journals? An Analysis by Faculty Status and Tenure

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This study analyzes the status and background of authors publishing in high-impact library science journals. Twenty-three high-impact journals were selected in this study by both quantitative and qualitative measures, while the analysis of author background focuses on whether the author holds a faculty status position with a tenure track. This study finds that 76% of academic librarians publishing in top-tier library science journals have faculty status.

It is important for every discipline, including library science, to monitor patterns of publication within the field—to discover who is publishing and in which journals. Librarians have long been looking at what groups contribute most to the body of knowledge in their field, what factors will lead to publication, and the nature of these publications. It is appropriate for any discipline to gather and analyze information that reveals "sources of strength in research and scholarship and the field's place among other disciplines."[1] This study attempts to contribute to the "monitoring of patterns" in publication in the field of library science by identifying which factors are associated with publication in influential peer-reviewed journals.

This begs the question: What exactly is an "influential" library science journal, and how can a journal's quality be measured? Most studies of publication in library science journals rely on various citation rankings to determine journal quality; however, because "the expert perception can reflect subtle nuances of journal value not readily captured by citation data or other objective measures," this study combines several citation rank indicators with qualitative measurements to obtain a broader picture of which journals are most influential and of the highest quality in the field. [2]

Using a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, we created a list of twenty-three influential journals in the library science field and then gathered information about the authors of articles published in each of these journals in 2007 and 2009. We organized author information such as type of librarian (academic vs. public), faculty status and/or tenure track, professionals in other fields outside academic libraries or library and information science (LIS) programs, students, retired,

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public librarians, and more. Our analysis shows that academic librarians who work at institutions with faculty status tend to publish more in influential journals than authors in other groups. These results have important implications within the conversations regarding publication in the library science field and within the debate regarding the appropriateness of extending faculty status to academic librarians, since faculty status is seldom considered as a factor influencing the rate of publication in high-impact journals. The authors hope to show through their studies that faculty status may be considered a significant link for publishing in high-impact journals.

Literature Review
Publication Productivity
Literature describing those who publish in library science journals is voluminous. Because other authors have compiled comprehensive reviews of current literature addressing this topic, we will not attempt to replicate their work. We will, however, attempt to discuss major trends. Most studies fall into one of three groups: group-based studies in which authors examine the publishing habits of a group of librarians based on geographical area or institution, category studies that look at publications based on type of institution (such as public vs. academic), and journal-based studies, which identify patterns in author and institutional contributions within a specific set of journals.

Group-based studies often look at factors such as faculty status and tenure-track appointments at individual universities and analyze how these factors contribute to publishing rates of academic librarians and professionals. For example, Hart et al. profiled 59 librarians at the Pennsylvania State University Libraries, which requires librarians to actively research and publish their work.[3] This study concluded that requiring publication influenced "both the quantity and the quality of librarians' publications in recent years."[4] Henry and Neville explored the research, publication, and service activities of Florida academic librarians through a web-based survey, and their results suggest that librarians' perception of the importance of publishing leads to higher research productivity.[5] Fennewald also studied Pennsylvania State, examining factors that contribute to librarian research.[6] The author suggested that the most significant factors promoting publishing productivity were the institution's expectation that all library faculty participate in research and the collegial support provided through mentoring.

Category-based studies often look for factors that influence authors to publish. For example, Penta and McKenzie looked at characteristics of librarians who contributed to seven library science journals between 1999 and 2003.[7] Only 3 percent of articles were authored by public librarians, while 85 percent of the authors were academic librarians or faculty in a LIS master's program. Another study analyzed articles published by college librarians (vs. librarians at universities) in two journals from the years 1986 to 1996 to identify factors that contributed to success in publishing.[8] This study found that in these journals, 8 percent of the articles were written by college librarians, thus confirming the assumption that university librarians tend to publish most often in the library science field. A survey given to these authors showed that the college librarians were least motivated by a pressure to publish due to tenure or promotion; their driving concern was a desire to share ideas and contribute to the conversation in their profession.

Journal-based studies analyze a specific group of journals to look at who is publishing in library literature. This group includes a set of four studies published between 1983 and 2006 analyzing publication patterns of LIS faculty in the United States.[9] Another 2006 study used the same information for the years 2002–2004 and then compared the results

to previous studies done in 1991–1993 and 1995–1997.[10] This study looked at ARL and ACRL institutions and trends, finding that both groups increased in mean total numbers of publications, although the rate of increase has decreased since the 1995–1997 study. Weller, Hurd, and Wiberly looked at articles written by academic librarians in 32 journals for the years 1993–1997; then again in 2006, they completed a follow-up study for 1998 to 2002.[11] They found that the twenty most productive libraries published more than 10 percent of all the articles in the journals they examined. In their conclusion, they state that "One could speculate that faculty status for librarians might have an impact on publication," which sparked the authors' interest regarding the effects of faculty status on publication.[12] A 2008 study similar to the Weller, Hurd, and Wiberly study was done by Seaman, who found that 10 percent of academic libraries accounted "for forty-two percent of the author affiliations in the five highest impact journals between 2000 and 2005."[13]

Measuring Quality

A common assumption in the field, and particularly in literature describing publication patterns, is that librarians who publish more often and whose work is most cited "are more effective at influencing the field's body of knowledge than faculty with fewer publications and citations."[14] Therefore, the most influential journals are those whose articles are cited the most often—and citation databases offer a "third-party endorsement of quality"; that is, the journal has a high "impact factor."[15]

To measure a journal's quality, many previous studies of publication in the library science field have used the Web of Science® (WoS) citation databases, which consist of three citation databases: 1) Science Citation Index Expanded, 2) Social Sciences Citation Index, and 3) Arts & Humanities Citation Index.[16] The Web of Science® has often been the standard tool for journal selection, and Seaman notes, "most studies use only one database, the Social Sciences Citation Index, as a resource."[17] However, many writers have pointed out, including Nisonger and Reed, the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI; now Thomson Reuters) database coverage is imperfect.[18] Meho and Yang argue that Web of Science® was the standard tool until recently, "primarily because it was the only general and comprehensive citation database in existence."[19]

Some authors also suggest using the Scopus database: Leydesdorff noted that "the two databases (Scopus and the *Science Citation Index*) are both overlapping and complementary,"[20] and Meho and Yang reported that "combining citations from Scopus and WoS increases the number of citations of SLIS [literature] as a whole by 35.1%."[21] Thus, it might be beneficial to consult several citation databases when determining journal quality; this is the approach taken by the present study.

Seaman's study made use of the Thomson Scientific's Journal Citation Reports (JCR) to determine the journals his study would consider to be "high impact." Thomson Scientific's impact factor, one of the most frequently used measures to evaluate a journal's quality, is the average number of times a journal's article has been cited—a high-impact factor means that a journal is cited frequently, thus suggesting that it is held with high regard in the field. Seaman notes that, while not all library journals are represented in the JCR, "many of the most respected" are included.[22]

However, the JCR does not directly measure how highly regarded a journal is within the field; a qualitative measurement is required. An attempt to measure journal quality beyond quantitative citation counts was made by Nisonger and Davis, who surveyed ARL library directors and deans of master of library science programs about library science academic journals.[23] In this study, the deans and directors ranked library science journals based on "how important publication in each journal is for promotion and tenure at [their] institution."[24] The results list the top journals according to the perception of library deans and professors.

Faculty Status

The present study has some implications for the issue of whether or not academic librarians should be awarded faculty status with the same status and similar responsibilities given to teaching professors. This issue has been debated for more than thirty years among librarians, professors, and administrators alike. The popularity and continued relevance of this issue is evident in the number of articles written on this issue—from the 1970s to 2009, more than 100 articles have been published in academic journals exploring, arguing against, or defending the faculty status of librarians.[25] One oft-cited argument both for and against librarian faculty status is the "pressure to publish." The study of librarians at Pennsylvania State University undertaken by Hart et al.—which. again, requires publication—showed that increased pressure to publish results in higher quality and quantity of articles, as did Henry and Neville's similar study of Florida academic libraries.[26] However, these studies can only speak for the culture at individual institutions, not the academic library profession as a whole.

Others have proposed that this pressure harms rather than helps the quality of publications, with "a plethora of dubious material churned out because people have to do it."[27] Another author noted, "libraries would have done just as well had the majority of the articles never been written."[28] The authors have found studies with conflicting results regarding the quality of articles, which is not our main focus at this present time. The present study makes a significant contribution by beginning the conversation about the connection between faculty status and the publication of articles in influential journals. In the Weller, Hurd, and Wiberly article on publication patterns of academic librarians, they state in their conclusion, "One could speculate that faculty status for librarians might have an impact on publication."[29] Alternatively, Watson examined English's survey of publications by ARL librarians and concluded, "Among the most productive libraries, librarians who do not have faculty status seem to publish at about the same rate as librarians at institutions where librarians do have faculty status."[30] However, Seaman's more recent study of the top 10 percent of libraries publishing in high-impact journals concludes that he could find no commonality between the top publishing libraries and other factors.

As the authors reviewed Seaman's analysis in preparation for this study, we found that 75 percent of the institutions at which these authors were employed were academic libraries offering faculty status. An additional 16 percent of institutions employed LIS professors with faculty status. Since the beginning of the authors' research, we have found no large-scale studies that look at publishing patterns among academic librarians, some studies of which seem to assume that all academic librarians have faculty status. We found that, of the 36 institutions listed in Seaman's research, there were 31 ARL schools, 23 of which offered faculty status, 8 of which did not offer faculty status.[31] There were 5 non-ARL institutions, 4 of which offer faculty status. Upon further analysis, 6 of the institutions that did not offer faculty status to their academic librarians did offer faculty status to their LIS professors. We don't have the detailed analysis of individual authors' biographical information; therefore, we are unable to determine exactly what percent of the authors had faculty status, although we can see that 33 of the 36 institutions offer faculty status either to their academic librarians or to their LIS faculty.

Though we did not initially anticipate including LIS faculty in our analysis, we realized, as we analyzed the data collected in the study, that LIS faculty represent nearly one-fifth of authors included in our sample. We are including data on LIS faculty because they contribute a sizable portion to LIS literature, even though their primary responsibilities in an academic setting are vastly different from academic librarians.

The authors felt there was compelling research to be done. The current study examines the quantity of publications in 23 high-impact journals to determine what role faculty status may play in publication.

Methodology

This study was carried out in two stages. First, we selected 23 high-impact academic journals published in the United States in the field of library science. To consider both quantitative and qualitative measures, we combined citation counts and survey evaluations of journal influence.[32] Then we collected and analyzed information about the institutional affiliation, faculty status, and tenure-track appointment of each author published in these journals in 2007 and 2009. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Brigham Young University.

Journal Selection

As discussed in the review of literature, citation databases such as those included in the Web of Science® have been the standard tools used by other researchers in identifying high-impact journals or articles.[33] We decided to consider the Scopus database along with the three Web of Science® databases. By using Scopus, which has a broad coverage and an organization similar to that of the Web of Science®, it increases the number of journals considered. Our study uses four journal performance evaluators in addition to the results of a study of journal perception among library and information science faculty.[34] The four quantitative rankings include ISI Impact Factor, ISI Five-Year Impact Factor, the Eigenfactor (all from the Web of Science®), and the Scopus rank. Table 1 summarizes these ranking factors. Using four different ranking factors to rank the journals gives a more comprehensive look at which peer-reviewed journals are having the highest impact within the library science field and helps paint a clearer picture of which journals librarians may consider most influential within their field.

To also consider librarian perception of high-impact journals, we looked at the results of the study by Nisonger and Davis, who surveyed ARL library directors and deans of ALA-accredited master of library science (LIS) programs about library science academic journals.[35] Building from Nisonger and Davis, we created a list of the 23 highest-ranking journals according to the four citation counts listed in table 1 and survey results from Nisonger and Davis. Table 2 shows all of the journals that were ranked in the top ten in 2010 according to at least one of these five ranking systems; these are the journals that were included in our study. This list includes only peer-reviewed journals—editorial review publications were removed. We consider this list

TABLE 1			
Journal Ranking Factors			
	Database	**Evaluation**	**Time Period**
ISI Impact Factor	Web of Science®	Counts the average an article published in the past two years was cited.	2 Years
ISI 5-Year Impact Factor	Web of Science®	Counts the average an article published in the past five years was cited.	5 Years
Eigenfactor	Web of Science®	Establishes different values for citations according to journal impact. Adjusts for citation patterns among different disciplines and self-citations.	5 Years
Journal Rank	Scopus	Establishes different values for citations according to journal impact. Adjusts for citation patterns among different disciplines and self-citations.	3 Years

of 23 peer-review journals to be a fair, comprehensive list that represents high-impact and well-respected journals in the field of library science.

Author Affiliation and Status

Our study collected and analyzed information about the authors of articles published in the years 2007 and 2009 in our list of 23 high-impact journals. Those years were chosen because they were recent when the research was gathered (in 2011) and yet allowed time for the articles to be recognized and cited. The population was limited to authors working for institutions in the United States. Only peer-reviewed academic articles were considered; book reviews, editorial writings, and opinions were excluded.

The authors of each article published in the identified high-impact journals in the target years were contacted via e-mail in 2011 and asked to complete a simple demographic survey. Authors who contributed to more than one article were contacted only once, but their responses appear in the data once for every article they authored from the same institution. If it was found that the author of a paper changed positions between 2007 and 2009, the authors accounted for that by looking at their employment status during the publication year. The survey asked recipients to state if they had faculty status and were in a tenure-track position, if they were LIS professors or another position, in which case we asked them to explain further. When we could determine the answers from biographical information included in the published article, the authors were not contacted.

When authors did not respond to the survey, we consulted author biographies, university websites, or an unpublished study conducted at our institution in 2010 to determine the current faculty status and tenure offerings at ARL institutions.[36] This 2010 study consulted an ARL SPEC[37] kit published in 2000 to determine which libraries offered faculty status, and it surveyed all ARL member libraries asking if each offered its librarians faculty status and/or tenure-track positions. Each library that did not respond was contacted individually so that we could collect data for all 124 academic member libraries. For the present study, we consulted these data in determining which libraries offered faculty status and/or tenure-track appointments. We assumed that universities offering faculty status in 2000 and 2010 also offered it in the years of interest (2007 and 2009). If an institution changed its faculty status policy sometime between 2000 and 2012, data for 2007 was not included, and 2009 was assumed close enough to 2010 that the 2010 data was included. We assumed that, if a library offered faculty status, then an author from that institution also had faculty status; however, we recognize that this may not be the case for all librarians and that this is a potential weakness in our study.

Once author information in terms of faculty status and tenure track was established, we combined the data from both 2007 and 2009 and organized it into ten author groups: (a) librarians with faculty status and tenure-track appointments, (b) librarians with faculty status but no tenure-track appointments, (c) librarians with tenure-track appointments but no faculty status, (d) librarians with neither tenure-track appointments nor faculty status, (e) LIS professors, (f) other academic professionals who work at the institution but are neither academic librarians nor LIS faculty, (g) retired librarians, (h) public librarians, (i) students, and (j) other (see figure 1). Chi-square tests of equal variance were performed to determine significance of differences among the number of articles authored by the members of each group. Survey results were analyzed first by comparing across each of these ten groups, then by narrowing down to academic librarians to compare faculty and tenure-track status.

Journal	Scopus	WoS—5-year Impact Factor	WoS—Eigenfactor	WoS—Impact Factor	Average Rank by ARL Directors	Average Rank by LIS Deans
Annual Review of Information Science and Technology	1	1	1	1	10	6
College & Research Libraries	2	5	3	6	1	
D-Lib Magazine	10					
Information Processing & Management						3
Information Technology and Libraries	6	7	9	9	7	
Internet Reference Services Quarterly	3					
JASIST					3	1
Journal of Academic Librarianship		4	2	3	4	
Journal of Documentation						5
Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery and E…	9					
Libraries & Culture						10
Library & Information Science Research		2	7	2		4
Library Hi Tech			6	10		
Library Quarterly	7	6	8	8	6	2
Library Resources and Technical services					8	
Library Trends		8	5	7	2	8
MIS Quarterly						9
Portal	4	3	4	4		
Reference and User Services Quarterly	5	10			5	
Reference Librarian	8					
Reference Services Review					9	
Scientometrics						7
Serials Review		9	10	5		

Table title (above table):

TABLE 2
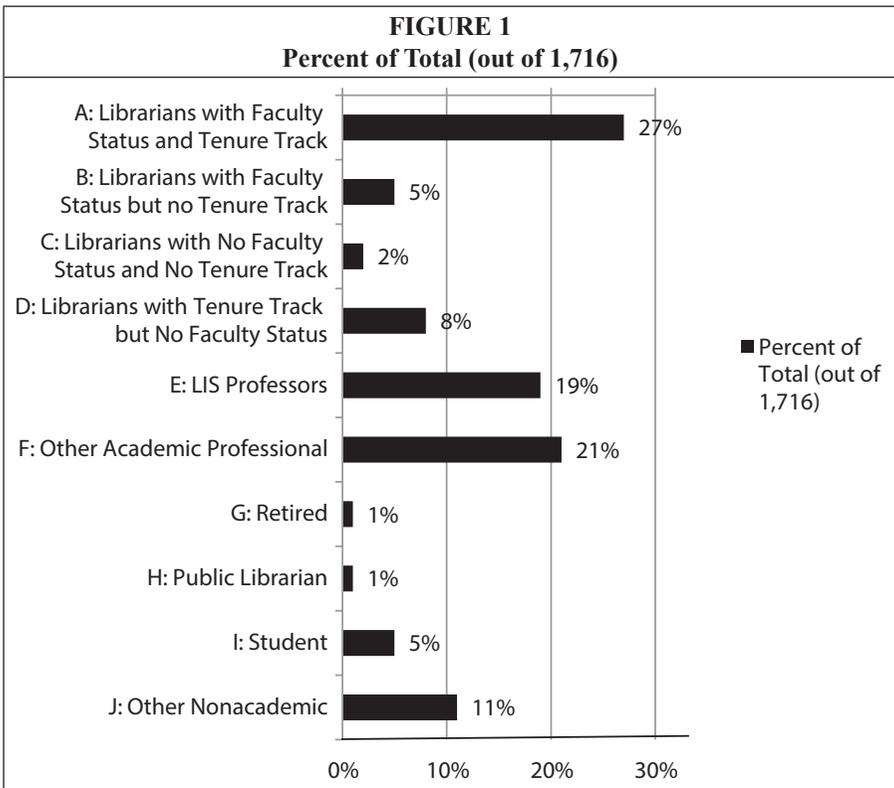**Journal Rankings for the Year 2010**

Results

Of the authors whose work appeared in 2007 and 2009 in the 23 identified high-impact journals, 1,986 were affiliated with U.S. institutions—992 in 2007 and 994 in 2009. Of the 1,712 surveys sent, 595 authors answered, with a response rate of 35 percent. Information for the remainder of the individuals in the present study was gathered by the researchers as described in the methodology. Overall, data from 1,806 authors were used (this number includes authors who published more than one article per occurrence).

Total Authors

Figure 1 shows the number of authors that fall into each of the ten author groups. The graph shows that there is a large difference between the numbers of authors in each group. The largest group of authors is (a) librarians with both faculty status and tenure-track positions with 457, which accounted for 27 percent of all authors represented, with (f) other academic professionals coming in second with 365, accounting for 21 percent.

If articles by professors in the graduate library science programs in group (e), who also have faculty status and tenure-track positions, representing 19 percent of authors, are added into group (a), then those publishing with faculty status in tenure-track positions account for 48 percent of authors in this study. This count also shows that, in these high-impact journals, library professionals outnumber authors not associated with the library science profession. The lowest numbers represented were (g) retired librarians (21 at 1.2%) and (h) public librarians (16 at 1%). The chi-square test for equal proportions shows that differences between the groups are statistically significant at $p < .0001$.

FIGURE 1
Percent of Total (out of 1,716)

Group	Percent
A: Librarians with Faculty Status and Tenure Track	27%
B: Librarians with Faculty Status but no Tenure Track	5%
C: Librarians with No Faculty Status and No Tenure Track	2%
D: Librarians with Tenure Track but No Faculty Status	8%
E: LIS Professors	19%
F: Other Academic Professional	21%
G: Retired	1%
H: Public Librarian	1%
I: Student	5%
J: Other Nonacademic	11%

Academic Librarians

Isolating data from academic librarians also reveals some interesting results. Figure 2 includes only academic librarians (group [a] through [d]). In figure 2, those with faculty status and tenure- track appointments represent the largest group of academic librarians published in the top journals, far exceeding any other group at 64 percent. Among academic librarians, more than three times as many librarians with faculty status and tenure-track appointments were represented. The group with the number of articles that comes the closest is (b) librarians who have faculty status but not a tenure-track position at 12 percent. When combined together, librarians with faculty status who may [group (a)] or may not [group (b)] have tenure-track positions account for 76 percent of academic librarians publishing. These results suggest that librarians with faculty status tend to publish the most out of other types of academic librarians in high-impact journals. A chi-square test for equal proportions, which generated a p value of <.0001, shows that the association between authors published and faculty status is statistically significant. However, we cannot conclude that the publishing rates are different between faculty statuses because we do not know what percent of the population of academic librarians have faculty status and tenure-track positions and what percent have faculty status but no tenure-track appointment.

FIGURE 2
Academic Librarians (n = 710)
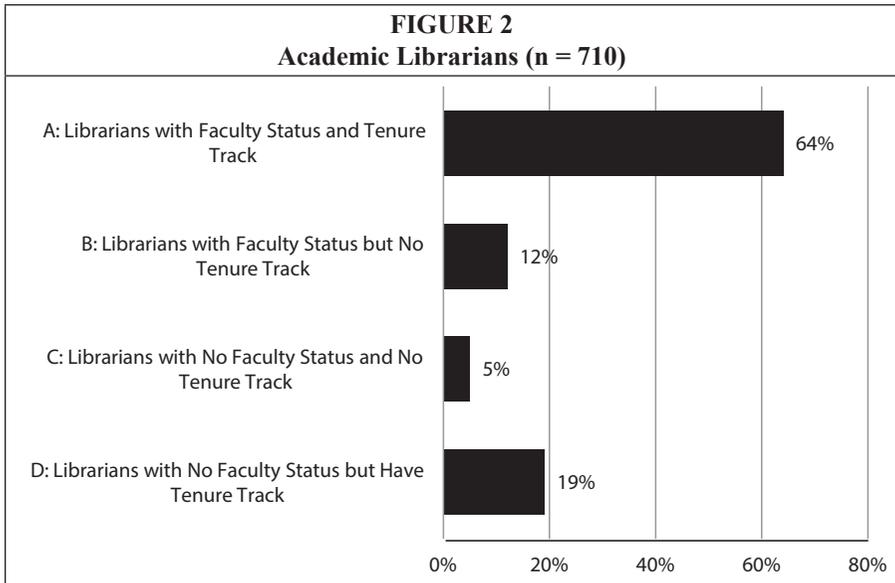
Considering Tenure-Track Appointments

The results also show that there are greater percentages of librarian authors who had tenure-track appointments than those who did not. The chi-square test for equal proportions between number of academic librarian authors published and academic librarian authors with and without tenure-track appointments generated a p value of <.0001, showing a statistically significant difference between total papers published by those with tenure-track appointments and those without tenure-track appointments. The total number of authors with tenure-track positions in our study (a combination of groups a and d) was 591 (83%) (referring again to figure 2), and those without tenure-track positions (groups a and b) was 119 (16%). These numbers show that, of all library science professionals who published in high-impact journals, the majority have or are working toward tenure.

Discussion

Overall, our results suggest that academic librarians with faculty status and tenure-track positions are publishing the most regularly in high-impact peer-reviewed journals than other academic librarians. This makes sense, given that librarians in this group usually work in a "publish or perish" world. The unique contribution that our methodology makes is to show that the academic librarians with faculty status and tenure-track appointments are not only publishing more but are publishing more in journals that can be considered high-impact or influential using at least one of four measurements. The results show an association between librarian faculty status and tenure-track appointments and publication in a high-impact library science journal. Again, this association cannot be touted as causation, but these results may have something significant to say not only within the realm of studying who is publishing in which journals, but within the debate in the literature over the role of faculty status and tenure-track appointments among academic librarians.

Comparison to ARL Faculty Status and Tenure-Track Offerings

The faculty status and tenure-track offerings of the ARL-accredited libraries, as reported by the Galbraith, Lemon, and Rowe study, provide an interesting comparison to our data.[38] According to this study, 49 percent of ARL libraries provide faculty status and tenure-track appointments, 10 percent provide faculty status but no tenure-track appointments, 37 percent do not provide faculty status or tenure-track appointments, and 4 percent do not provide faculty status but do provide tenure-track appointments. Comparing data between the present study and data our institution collected in the Galbraith et al. study brings up several questions.[39] For example, why do 37 percent of the ARL libraries provide no faculty status or tenure-track positions, and yet in our study only 13.1 percent of the authors were similarly categorized as not having faculty status or tenure-track positions? No conclusions, however, can be made because we do not know what percentages of librarians from each ARL library are in the group of subjects. Further studies looking into this issue would be beneficial.

Contribution to Other Studies

The results of our study make a significant contribution to the discussion of which factors most influence publishing among academic librarians, particularly the study contributed by Seaman (2008). This researcher analyzed the authors who published in five library journals—selected because they consistently had high citation rankings—between 2000 and 2005 and identified which institutions were most commonly represented in these journals. He took the list of the top 10 percent most represented institutions, 38 in total, and attempted to find a relationship or common factor shared by each to help explain what factors can lead to high rates of publication in quality journals. The factors he examined included ARL membership, the presence of a PhD-granting library school, and the total number of librarians. Seaman concluded that around "ten percent of institutions account for over forty percent of the primary and secondary author affiliations, [suggesting] that a handful of North American libraries regularly produce high-quality scholarship."[40]

Nevertheless, Seaman could not find a singular defining characteristic shared by these libraries:

> However large universities and small colleges are represented in the top ten percent and both private and public institutions are also represented. There are libraries with over 200 professional staff and others with fewer than fifty. There are libraries with ready access to PhD-granting library schools and those without. Some libraries offer tenure, while others do not.[41]

But if we look at Seaman's results in light of the results of the present study, we find that the defining factor may be the offering of faculty status. As previously explained, 91 percent of the listed institutions in his study offer faculty status to academic librarians (75%) and LIS professors (16%)—showing that Seaman's research, in a way, corroborates the conclusions of the present study, thus suggesting that faculty status is an important consideration in a conversation about not only publication quantity but publication quality.

Conclusion

This study adds to recent research and conversations within the library science field about who is publishing in the field and the role of librarian faculty status in encouraging publication. In our list of 23 high-impact library journals, a significant majority of the academic librarians published were offered faculty status at their institutions. While many in the conversation regarding the appropriateness of faculty status for librarians have suggested that the "pressure to publish" produces a high quantity of low-quality articles, our results, combined with a new analysis of the Seaman (2008) study, suggests that faculty status may actually encourage publication in the most respected journals.

Notes

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12. Weller, Hurd, and Wiberly, "Publication Patterns of U.S. Academic Librarians from 1993 to 1997," 360.

13. Scott Seaman, "North American Institutions Most Frequently Represented in High-Impact Library Journals," *LIBRES Library and Information Science Research Electronic Journal* 18, no. 2 (Sept. 2008): 1–19.

14. Denice Adkins and John Budd, "Scholarly Productivity of U.S. LIS Faculty," 374–89.

15. Seaman, "North American Institutions," 2.

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18. Thomas E. Nisonger, "Citation Autobiography: An Investigation of ISI Database Coverage in Determining Author Citedness," *College & Research Libraries* 65, no. 2 (Mar. 2004): 152–63; Kathlyn L. Reed, "Citation Analysis of Faculty Publication: Beyond Science Citation Index and Social Science Citation Index," *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* 83, no. 4 (Oct. 1995): 503–08.

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