

# Guidelines and Procedures for the Screening and Appointment of Academic Librarians

*Approved as policy by the Board of Directors of the Association of College and Research Libraries on June 21, 1977. This statement is an expansion and extension of the recommendations on appointment in ACRL's "Model Statement of Criteria and Procedures for Appointment, Promotion in Academic Rank, and Tenure for College and University Librarians," published in the September 1973 and October 1973 issues of College & Research Libraries News and approved as policy, with minor revisions, in July 1974.*

## INTRODUCTION

In colleges, universities, and other institutions of higher education, the selection and appointment of librarians rank among the most important and consequential decisions to be made. To improve these decisions many library administrators are turning to a consultative arrangement in the selection process. In some cases the administrator chiefly responsible for the final decision simply requests comments and evaluations from the appropriate individuals. In others this process has been formalized by the establishment of a search committee.<sup>1</sup> In either case the goals and benefits of consultation are similar. Consultation through a search committee solicits a breadth and range of opinion, and it facilitates objective consideration of the candidates' qualifications. It also promotes a sense of participation in the selection process by interested constituencies.

Because selection is a two-way process, these goals and benefits apply to the candidates as well as to the institution. Candidates receive a clearer and more balanced view of the institution if they have the opportunity to be interviewed by several representatives of the institution. Search committees provide the opportunity for discussion, for the development of consensus among the interviewers, and for the inclusion of varied representative viewpoints.

The advantages of using search committees for regular full-time appointments at the senior level have been recognized by many institutions. Use of search committees for other professional library positions is now also encouraged. The following guidelines are provided for those institutions which choose to use search committees. Institutions recruiting without search committees may also find that many of these principles will be useful.

## THE GUIDELINES

### I. Formation of Search Committees

The ultimate objective of the search process is to select the best possible applicant in a fair, equitable, and open manner. Search committees may be elected or appointed. In either case the immediate goal in the formation of such committees should be to create a body representative of the constituencies affected by the position. Persons accepting appointment to the committee should automatically disqualify themselves as real or potential nominees.

### II. Charge to Search Committees

The administrator to whom the committee is responsible should instruct the committee in writing, at the outset of the process, as to the following:

- A. Approximate date for submission of a list of nominees and proposed date of appointment
- B. Number of finalists to be recommended
- C. Affirmative action/equal opportunity requirements (In the absence of a clear understanding of these requirements, the committee should consult with the appropriate local officer at the outset of the search.)
- D. Arrangements for financial and staff resources
- E. Responsibility for documenting committee actions and for preserving those records
- F. The need for confidentiality and discretion
- G. Any unique concerns with respect to the position.

The committee should have the prerogative of discussions with the administrator to whom the committee is responsible regarding any of the terms of the charge.

### III. Development and Use of the Position Description

A written position description and a summary to be used for advertising purposes should be prepared at the outset of the search and should function as the standard against which candidate qualifications are subsequently judged. It should include a full account of the responsibilities of the position and should describe the educational background, experience, and competencies desired of the candidate.

In the development of such a statement, care should be taken to ensure correlation among position requirements, committee and/or ad-

ministrative expectations, and salary range offered.

#### IV. Posting the Position

The responsible administrator or the chairperson should file notification of the position in the appropriate offices of the local institution and in appropriate publications, taking care that all groups which are protected by equal opportunity/affirmative action legislation are made aware of the vacancy. Notifications should include a brief description of responsibilities, qualifications, and salary range. Such notifications should also reflect those criteria against which qualifications will be judged and should indicate the information to be provided about each nominee or applicant. All announcements and invitations to apply for the position should be coordinated carefully. A closing date for receipt of applications and approximate appointment date should be specified in these communications.

#### V. Ethical Considerations

Committee members should be receptive to all staff and outside comments, but all statements emanating from the committee should be stated or written by a designated spokesperson for the committee. References should be solicited from individuals whose names are provided by the applicant, and the contents should be held in strict confidence within the committee. Additional professional references may also be consulted for those candidates in whom the committee is seriously interested. Should a visit to the candidate's home institution be considered essential, it should be conducted in a professional and discrete manner with adequate notification being given to all individuals involved. At the time of the request referees should be advised as to whether or not the contents of the references will be made available to the candidate in accordance with local legislation and practice. Upon request the candidates should be entitled to a full list of those individuals from whom references have been solicited.

#### VI. Initial Communication with Nominators and Applicants

All nominations and/or applications should be courteously and promptly acknowledged. To ensure the individual's right to privacy, persons nominated for the position should be promptly apprised of their nominations and permission requested and secured in writing before references are contacted and credentials scrutinized. Candidates who apply for a position should secure the permission of referees before listing them.

#### VII. Selection and Interview Procedures

##### A. Selection Process

Each committee should establish its own plan for screening and evaluating nominees and applicants. Selection policies and procedures

should be consistent with those established on an institution-wide basis. Whatever procedures are employed, the entire committee is responsible for the legitimacy of the process. Every committee member in every stage of the search should have full access to the names and files of all persons under consideration.

All applicants should be screened with reference to the qualifications and requirements stated in the position description. The function of initial screening is to identify and eliminate, early in the search process, nominees and applicants who are clearly unqualified. The list of persons who remain under consideration after the initial screening should be those to whom the committee will be giving careful consideration and about whom the committee may be seeking additional information. Responsibility for requesting such information should be clearly designated and its form clearly specified. Fair, objective, consistent, and equitable processes should be used to narrow the field of candidates to the desired number of finalists, who should be invited for interviews.

##### B. Interviews

Based on the candidate's and the institution's needs for information, the committee and the appropriate administrative officer shall determine the nature (breadth, depth, length, number, etc.) of the interview. Consideration for the candidate's personal comfort should extend throughout the interview schedule. Adequate travel directions should be given to external candidates. While maximizing the use of available time is important to both the institution and the candidate, interview schedules should acknowledge the personal needs of candidates.

Whenever possible the interview schedule should be sent to the candidate several days before the interview occurs. Changes in the date(s) of a confirmed interview should occur only as a last resort and with notification to all parties concerned. While internal changes in the interview schedule may be necessary, these should be kept to a minimum. Both the candidate and the interviewers should recognize the constraints of time during the interview process and should follow the announced schedule as closely as possible. Adequate time should be accorded the candidate to ensure that departure travel plans are fulfilled.

##### C. Interview Expenses

The cost of travel, meals, and lodging, if any, for candidates invited to the campus for interviews should be borne by the inviting institution. When this is not the practice, candidates should be so apprised when an invitation is issued. If an off-campus site is selected for the invited interview, the same financial arrangements should prevail. Exceptions should be considered for interviews which occur at conferences where both the institutional representative(s) and the candidate(s) are attendees.

#### D. Fair and Uniform Treatment

All candidates, whether they are external or internal to the institution, should be accorded the same treatment in the screening and interview process. At the outset of its work the committee should decide the types of documentation (curriculum vitae, application forms, letters of recommendation, etc.) it will request of the candidates. Likewise, interviews should be similar in length, scope, format, and personnel. Candidates should be judged in terms of the criteria delineated beforehand for the position in question.

#### VIII. Recommendation of Candidates

The committee should consider and evaluate with all deliberate speed the information garnered regarding the candidate in order to select a final list of candidates. The final list of candidates should be communicated by the chairperson to the administrator to whom the committee is responsible. The committee or the administrator may wish to schedule a meeting for mutual discussion of the list.

#### IX. Advanced Communications with Candidates

All nominations and/or applications should be acknowledged courteously, and so far as possible candidates should be apprised promptly of elimination from consideration. In turn, candidates should report to the committee any change in status such as acceptance of another position or reconsideration of candidacy. This mutual reporting should be undertaken periodically throughout the search process with those candidates still active, particularly if the deliberative period of time becomes extensive. Candidates should be advised of important anticipated or actual institutional changes of conditions.

Once a decision has been reached to offer the position to a particular candidate, the chief administrative officer or his/her designee should convey this information to the successful candidate. While the initial form of this communication may be oral, the official offer should be in writing and should include the specifics of the offer, i.e., title, salary, date of appointment, fringe benefits, et al. The successful candidate should be allowed a reasonable period of time, acceptable to both parties and agreed upon beforehand, to reach a decision on the matter.<sup>3</sup>

#### X. Extending Searches

All candidates should be notified of the intention to extend the search and to readvertise the position should the committee be unable to reach a decision based upon the applications received or should desired qualifications be changed during the search process.

#### XI. Announcement of Appointment

Upon selection of a candidate and his/her formal acceptance in writing, the chief admin-

istrative officer, the committee, or its designee should coordinate the announcement of the appointment with the successful candidate and should notify all other active candidates in writing of the appointment. An announcement of the appointment should be made locally and/or nationally as deemed necessary.

#### XII. Records of Proceedings

##### A. Filing of Affirmative Action Reports

The responsible administrator (in collaboration with the appropriate local officer) should instruct the chairperson of the committee as to what official reports are to be filed. The chairperson should complete the necessary reports promptly and accurately.

##### B. Preservation/Disposition of Files

Promptly after the position is filled and all affirmative action reports are filed, but not until then, the chairperson should be responsible for reviewing all applicants' files. The files should be stored or disposed of in accordance with laws, regulations, and practices currently applicable in the local setting. Personal materials (e.g., books, media, folios, etc.) supplied by applicants or other sources should be returned if requested.

#### XIII. Conclusion of Searches

After the work has been completed, committees of an ad hoc nature should be disbanded while standing committees should turn to other business.<sup>3</sup>

#### NOTES

1. The term "search committee" as used in these guidelines designates any committee constituted for the purpose of performing any or all of the functions of compiling lists of candidates for vacant positions, screening (and eliminating) candidates in accord with agreed-upon selection criteria, and determining the slate of nominees for submission to the administrator responsible for the position.
2. See "Model Statement of Criteria and Procedures for Appointment, Promotion in Academic Rank, and Tenure for College and University Librarians," *College & Research Libraries News* (September 1973 and October 1973).
3. The ACRL Committee on Academic Status gratefully acknowledges the permission of the University of Minnesota to utilize some of the concepts and statements set forth in the document entitled "Senate Consultative Committee: Proposed Guidelines for the Establishment and Function of Search Committee for Filling Major Administrative Positions at the University of Minnesota." ■■

*Copies of this statement are available upon request from the ACRL Office, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611.*