

# A Survey of the Academic Status of Librarians in North Carolina's Colleges and Universities

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For many years, even decades now, the problem of where professional librarians belong in an academic community has been a controversial issue and never fully resolved. Although progress has been made, with librarians throughout the country having been granted some of the rights, privileges and responsibilities enjoyed by the teaching faculty, a survey conducted by the State University of New York in 1968 revealed that 14.2 per cent of the reporting libraries grant "full faculty status" to librarians.<sup>1</sup> The term "full faculty status" was defined as complete equality with the academic faculty in regard to rank and titles, promotion criteria, tenure, sabbatical leave, rates of pay, holidays and vacations, representation and participation in faculty government and fringe benefits.

Perhaps librarians themselves may be somewhat responsible for their position, because they have been willing to settle for less than equal status and some even seem resigned to their fate. Others have gone in the opposite direction and said that they do not consider themselves faculty members since they do not hold classes.

The present writer, because of a direct

interest in this situation, chose to conduct a survey of the status of North Carolina librarians currently employed in the fifteen public universities (North Carolina School of the Arts was not included) and eleven non-public senior colleges of the state. This survey was made in partial fulfillment for a graduate degree in library science in the Department of Library Science at East Carolina University. A questionnaire was mailed during the summer, 1972, to the twenty-six state institutions to solicit responses which would perhaps indicate the position of professional librarians in North Carolina colleges and universities.

The general inquiry was: "Are professional full-time librarians in higher education granted the same rights and privileges as those members of the same institution who are full-time teaching faculties?" The questionnaire was based on the "Standards for Faculty Status for College and University Librarians" adopted by the membership of the Association of College and Research Libraries. All points adopted in the standards<sup>2</sup> were covered in the questionnaire. Specifically, inquiry was made as to whether existing policies were the same

<sup>1</sup>Raj Madan, "The Status of Librarians in Four-Year State Colleges and Universities," *College and Research Libraries*, XXIV (September, 1968), 381-386.

<sup>2</sup>"Standards for Faculty Status for College and University Librarians," *College and Research Libraries News*, XXXIII, No. 8 (September, 1972), 210-212.

for professional librarians as for the teaching faculty in the following areas: (1) rank and title; (2) criteria for promotion — such as research, seniority, publications, advanced degrees, teaching or work performance; (3) tenure; (4) sabbatical and other research leaves; (5) vacations and holidays; (6) salary scale; (7) participation

in university and college government with voting rights and representation; (8) library governance similar to that of a school or department; (9) professional responsibilities and self-determination; (10) backgrounds in education and experience; (11) research and travel funds accessibility; and (12) academic freedom.

|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Response:   | 65% (17 of 26 institutions)    |
| Total no. librarians employed:                    | 260                            |
| Total no. considered full-time professional:      | 243                            |
| Equivalent rank and title:                        | 49.8% (121 of 243)             |
| Sabbatical or research leaves:                    | 31.3% ( 76 of 243)             |
| Research funds:                                   | 75.7% (184 of 243)             |
| Travel funds:                                     | 51% (124 of 243)               |
| Equivalent vacations (by no. of librarians):      | 33.3% ( 81 of 243)             |
| Equivalent vacations (by no. of institutions):    | 64.7% ( 11 of 17 institutions) |
| Equivalent salaries scale (by no. of librarians): | 31.7% ( 77 of 243)             |
| 12 month salary basis (by no. of institutions):   | 88.2% ( 15 of 17 institutions) |
| 9 month salary basis (by no. of institutions):    | 11.8% ( 2 of 17 institutions)  |
| Identical holidays:                               | 76.1% (185 of 243)             |
| Tenure:   | 35.4% ( 86 of 243)             |
| Academic freedom:                                 | 100%                           |
| Criteria for promotion:                           |                                |
| a. Work performance                               | 94.1% ( 16 of 17 institutions) |
| b. Advanced degrees                               | 82.4% ( 14 of 17 institutions) |
| c. Seniority                                      | 64.7% ( 11 of 17 institutions) |
| d. Publications                                   | 41.2% ( 7 of 17 institutions)  |
| e. Peer review                                    | 41.2% ( 7 of 17 institutions)  |
| f. Research                                       | 35.3% ( 6 of 17 institutions)  |

Of the twenty-six college and university library directors to whom the questionnaires were sent, seventeen directors, or 65%, responded. Among these seventeen libraries, the total number of employed librarians was 260 and of these 260 librarians, 232 held master's degrees, 197 being in the discipline of library science. Of the 260 librarians, 243 were considered full-time professional librarians by the

directors of the libraries in which they were employed. A small percentage (3.7%) were called professional librarians without holding a master's degree.

The primary aim of the questionnaire however, was to determine the number of professional librarians who have been granted the same rights and privileges as teaching faculty. Of the 243 librarians reported as full-time professionals, 121, or

49.8%, were allowed rank and title identical to their teaching colleagues; and 76, or 31.3%, were being granted sabbatical or other research leaves. Research funds were available to 184, but travel funds to only 124.

Together with leaves granted, vacations and salary scales showed the greatest difference: equivalent vacations 81, or 33.3%; and equivalent salary scales 77, or 31.7%. Fifteen of the seventeen institutions based salaries on a twelve-month year however, instead of a nine-month one that most teaching faculty enjoy. Holidays were shared with teaching faculty by 185 of 243 librarians, and tenure was granted (at a specified time) to 86 of the 243, or 35.4%. About one-half of the full-time professional librarians were allowed to participate in university government or library governance like that of the schools and departments. Academic freedom was, according to the survey, allowed to all of the librarians. Work performance was listed sixteen times out of seventeen as a criteria for promotion, with advanced degrees named fourteen times; seniority, eleven; publications, seven; peer review, seven; and research, six.

One of the responding directors stated that librarians at that institution had the rank of faculty but no professional titles,

and librarians were not accorded tenure. Another stated that tenure was not clearly defined for faculty, but "assumed to be the same." The length of vacations varied greatly: eleven of the seventeen respondents said that their vacations were the same as the teaching faculty, six said that they were not. The shortest time allotted for vacations was 15 days, allowed by only one of the institutions.

The conclusion is clear. In North Carolina's institutions of higher learning, librarians, even with the same qualifications in education and experience, are not for the most part given the same rights and privileges as other faculty members. There are professional librarians actually performing teaching functions, both formal and informal. Even if most librarians never enter a classroom however, their right to be called faculty members is still entirely legitimate.

Can being unequal in all these areas create pleasant working relations among those employed to accomplish the same ends by the same employer at the same institution? It is imperative that these inequalities be eliminated and that institutions of higher education in the state of North Carolina fully support those "hidden faculty" in that big building known as the heart of the campus — the library.

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