

Sources of Professional Staff in Selected Academic Libraries

All libraries surveyed report that their own library school graduates and faculty wives hold positions on their staffs. Both advantages and disadvantages to such appointments are expressed by respondents to the survey. A trend toward the elimination or curtailment of appointment of local library school graduates to the staff was revealed by the study. Problems arising from the appointment of faculty wives and other local persons may be eliminated or reduced by better communication between library administration and staff and by the achievement of a high degree of professionalism by academic librarians.

THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE of an entire library operation depends upon the recruitment of well-qualified librarians. Special considerations arise in connection with recruiting in academic libraries because of the increasing tendency to apply faculty standards to the professional library staff.¹ If college and university librarians are to achieve full academic standing alongside classroom faculty, they must show a willingness to apply the same standards to the selection of prospective staff members as are applied in other departmental faculties.

Several questions arise concerning the source of library staff members. At colleges and universities which offer ALA-accredited programs, to what extent does the library recruit the graduates of its own library school? And, if their own graduates are appointed to the library staff, what restrictions are placed on their appointments? Can any effect be seen on the standing of librarians in the academic community by the practice?

Another series of questions arises concerning the appointment of local persons to professional library staff positions. Local persons as herein defined are wives of university faculty members and graduate students, and/or of other persons employed in the community as principal breadwinners of the family. To what extent are such local persons appointed to library staffs at academic libraries and how do these appointments affect those who occupy these positions? Are there special problems associated with these appointments either for the library administrators or for those holding the appointment?

In an attempt to secure information regarding these questions—that of the appointment of library school graduates to the university library staff and that of local persons employed on the staff—an inquiry was sent to each of the forty-four university libraries in the U.S. and Canada at which there was at that time an ALA-accredited library school. The inquiry drew responses from thirty-three libraries, the sizes of which varied from one with a professional staff of 180 to several with staffs

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of fewer than ten professional librarians.

All of the schools reporting had some librarians on their staffs holding library degrees from their own university. A large eastern school, while not able to give an exact figure, reported "perhaps a majority" of a staff of 180 to be their own graduates, while a west coast school reported fifty of a staff of 144 professional librarians holding library degrees from their own university. Other large schools reporting included a Canadian university with ninety-two of 139, a northern U.S. university with 63 percent of 135, and a western U.S. school with 50 percent of 110. Among the smaller schools reporting were two from the eastern seaboard. One of these had five of six with degrees from its own school; the other six of eleven. A smaller university from the southwest reported four of twelve and a New York university had six of twelve.

Among private universities, those reporting included a lake state school with forty-five of ninety, an eastern church-related university with twenty-five of thirty-eight, a midwestern university with forty-three of fifty-five, a northeastern university with forty-three of sixty-seven, and a southeastern university with nine of twenty.

Attitudes regarding the employment of local library school graduates vary from unqualified endorsement to firm though often unofficial objection. Among the former may be cited a response from a small school near Chicago.

We have been entirely satisfied with the professional librarians who hold library degrees from our own institution. In fact, we find it an advantage to hire individuals whose performance we can predict. We have found them very loyal and stable.

And from a large university in the Midwest.

It does offer you the 'cream of the crop' which probably outweighs the somewhat assumed disadvantage of inbreeding.

A contrasting position is represented by the statement from a private northeastern university.

Our general policy is not to appoint—University Library School graduates to our staff. However, exceptions are made to this policy when the candidate is unusually qualified.

It may be noted here that forty-three of sixty-seven staff members at this library are its own graduates.

An intermediate position between open endorsement and outright rejection is expressed by the greater number of those replying to the inquiry. Typical of this position is that of a state university in the Southeast.

No real policy. If a graduating student applies and we have a vacancy and his qualifications are good, we hire him.

Various criteria are set in establishing limits on the appointment of staff members. In some cases the limit is based on a percentage of the total staff, such as that imposed at a large western state university.

Not a firm policy. However, we have no intention of overloading this staff with our own graduates. As a rough rule of thumb, we think perhaps 10 percent of the total professional staff would be about right.

In other cases, prior experience at another library is required to qualify for an appointment to the library staff. The statement from an eastern school is typical of this position.

We do not hire new graduates. After they have had a year or more experience in another library we will hire them.

Still another qualification is held by a northern university which appoints from local graduates at the beginning level but restricts upper level appoint-

ments to graduates of other schools.

In most cases recognition is given to the problems that would arise if all or a majority of the staff positions were filled by persons from any one school, whether that school be local or not. The problems arising from inbreeding in academic departments have been recognized and restrictions are often placed on the practice by many departments of the university. It is perhaps an indication of the movement of a library staff toward full academic standing to resist the practice of inbreeding, a resistance which characterizes the faculties of many academic departments of the university.

The second part of the present study deals with the extent of local employment in selected university libraries and the influence of this practice on salaries and other benefits to academic librarians as well as administrative problems created by local employment. Replies to the inquiry revealed some difficulty in agreeing on what constitutes local employment.² In academic libraries located in large metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Baltimore, or Toronto, the occupation of librarians' spouses may be for the most part unknown or difficult to determine. This problem was reported from the University of Illinois in Chicago, Emory, and others. Guy R. Lyle at Emory expressed uncertainty as to the meaning of the category. He reported his staff to include one faculty wife, another librarian whose wife is employed as a social worker in the community, and a third whose wife is employed in a public library in the community. The first is clearly what is meant here by a local person. The second two are probably not, since in each case the librarian is the male cohort of a family and by common agreement could be assumed to be the principal breadwinner. The increasingly assertive role of women in American society may be reason to qualify this assumption.

Maryland reports "a considerable percentage of women professionals are wives of faculty members or students." In addition the case is cited of an unmarried member of an area family living at home who holds a position on the library staff. This instance and those cited at Emory illustrate the difficulty of categorizing local persons.

Although it is difficult to reach a completely satisfactory definition of a "local person," some useful observations can be made concerning the practice of local employment on the basis of answers reported by libraries to the queries. Twenty-nine of the schools reporting did list local persons on their staffs, although ten schools gave no figure as to the number or percentage of the staff which is local. A west coast school with 144 staff members estimated fourteen or more of those to be local persons. An eastern school with 180 persons, the largest staff reported, had only one faculty wife on the library staff.

Of other libraries reporting the appointment of local persons to their staffs, Hawaii, with approximately half of fifty-eight, represented the highest percentage of local persons on a staff. Geographical isolation and the difficulty of moving to and from the mainland were cited as explanations for the large percentage of local persons on the library staff there. Others reporting relatively high figures for local employment were a midwestern state university with an estimate of ten local persons from a staff of thirty-one librarians; a border state school with about twenty from a staff of fifty; and a southern school with nineteen of fifty-one staff members reported as local.

Besides the above cited eastern school with one of 180 local persons on the staff, others reporting relatively low numbers of such persons included a southern state university with twelve of fifty-one and one-half, a New York university with two of twelve, a northwest-

ern university with six of forty-eight, and a northeastern university with eleven and three-fourths of seventy-six and three-fourths.

Three eastern seaboard schools reported no local persons on their staffs but indicated there was no reason for their omission other than the lack of availability of such persons. None cited any problems anticipated with local appointments nor salary differential as a result.

A Canadian university indicated that in a city of the size in which it is located no way exists to determine which persons on the staff have "close relatives employed in the city." Two other large universities in major metropolitan areas also showed both lack of concern and knowledge of the local origin of persons on their staffs.

Of those schools offering observations about the practice, the consequence of local employment most commonly cited was the influence on salaries. A mid-western university indicated that until recently local persons had been deliberately sought out for employment and paid less as a matter of policy, but that the practice has now been discontinued.

A southern university reported that low salary scales forced a greater use of local persons than would otherwise be the case, with some consequent disadvantages to the administration of the library. An Illinois and a New York school both acknowledged the depression of salary scales as a result of the use of local persons. The former reported part-time professional salaries to be especially affected by local employment.

Catholic University, Drexel Institute, University of Minnesota, and Wayne State University each declared that local origin was not considered or was an unknown factor in the appointment of professional librarians. Each of these institutions is located in a large metropolitan area where greater employment opportunities for librarians provide alternatives to the university library for

faculty wives and others seeking professional appointments. Hence the incidence of local employment is reduced and any benefit or disadvantage minimized or removed.

Only one institution reported an advantage to the appointment of local persons to the staff:

In general local persons are a bonus to the library and provide a good source for staff. On a very few occasions there have been some urgings to see that a wife is employed.

Other library administrators reported problems connected with local appointments. One university in the South mentioned "problems of faculty wives and student wives who want to take time off when their husbands are out of school between terms, Christmas, holidays, etc. . . ." The matter of scheduling reflects the anomalous position of the library in the university community in reconciling its duties and responsibilities with the academic calendar. Technical processing must continue whether classes are in session or not and research activities of faculty and students which require library resources are not interrupted by holidays and semester breaks. The problem facing library administrators of reconciling the ongoing demand for library service with increasing demands by academic librarians for full faculty recognition along with faculty benefits will continue to demand the attention of the profession.

The problem of nepotism was referred to in comments by two large state universities. At one of these, tenure is denied faculty wives and "an annual waiver of nepotism from the Board of Trustees" is required. Morale problems are reported as a result of this limitation. A University of Michigan administrator pointed out the awkwardness of the situation for the library should it be necessary to dismiss a faculty-wife

librarian for cause. The ill will thus created can be far-reaching.

The question of the employment of local persons as herein defined does appear to occur in a significant number of academic libraries. Disagreement as to what defines a person as local creates some difficulty in making meaningful judgments about the practice.

Problems arising from the practice may be considered from two standpoints. The first standpoint is that of the librarians themselves, that is, the disadvantages that a faculty or graduate student's wife experiences as a result of her relationship to a male member of the academic community. Two disadvantages that are noted by respondents are discrimination in salary and ineligibility for faculty benefits such as tenure. Salary differentials for local persons no doubt reflect an economic reality, unless otherwise altered through coercion or by an attempt on the part of an administration to achieve equity. When necessity dictates and when no alternative is present an employee will often accept the salary that is offered. Librarians, like many professional people, are without strong and effective organizations to act as bargaining agents for their constituencies in matters of salary and other occupational benefits. Recent developments among librarians in California and elsewhere, and indeed restiveness for greater coercive powers through ALA by elements of its membership, are all healthy winds of change in bringing about the elimination of salary differentials and preventing the loss of other professional benefits.³

The second disadvantage mentioned, ineligibility for tenure under the nepotism rule, arises from the application of a rule which commonly occurs in business as well as governmental agencies. That it may work to the disadvantage of librarians who are second persons in the family is not because of any particular discrimination against their

profession but merely because they are the second person in the family employed by the institution and are therefore excluded from holding a tenured position on the same staff. Examples of this may be the one reported at Emory where two male members of the library staff had wives working in other departments of the university. In one of these cases the wife is reported to be a librarian but is not employed by the university library. A similar case exists at the University of Oklahoma.

The second standpoint regarding the appointment of local persons to the library staff is that of the library administration. Various comments received indicate that this practice has both advantages and disadvantages to the administration. The problem of accommodating library work schedules to the desires of wives requesting time off during academic holidays may be troublesome for an administrator. Another serious difficulty may arise when a faculty-wife librarian proves to be unsatisfactory. Dismissing or reprimanding such a person can become difficult because of repercussions beyond the library. When salaries are depressed because of local employment, administrative difficulties arise in connection with recruiting. Only two institutions referred explicitly to the problem of salaries and in each instance reported that salary discrimination against local persons had been discontinued.

It should be pointed out that while twenty-nine libraries reported the practice of hiring locally, only six commented on the adverse effect of the practice either from the viewpoint of the librarian or of the administration. The remaining twenty-three either make no comment or report no known problem.

The disadvantages to the library staff member from the nepotism rule would apply to any second employee member of a family in all situations where nepotism rules occur. As long as librarian-

ship remains an attractive profession for wives and as long as wives traditionally fill subordinate roles professionally to the male breadwinner, hardships are inevitable, though they are on the whole a minor consideration.

When academic libraries apply to themselves the same rigorous standards as are applied to faculties in other academic departments, academic librarianship as the first profession of a household will reduce the incidence of salary differential and nepotism discrimination against librarians. One trend toward the adoption of those standards is the restriction on appointments from the library school within the same university.

In conclusion it may be observed that local persons constitute an important source of supply for professional library positions in academic libraries. They probably will and should continue to do so in the future. Disadvantages both for the professional librarian as well as for the library administration should be clearly recognized and accepted at the time of making and receiving the appointment. Efforts to eliminate unfair practices such as salary discrimination or ineligibility for fringe benefits should be continued. Librarians accepting such an appointment should not do so expecting considerations with respect to scheduling, vacations, etc., that do not accrue to other persons on the staff. At the same time all librarians must expect and demand full freedom to establish work patterns consistent with the concept of professionalism.⁴

Included in that concept is the responsibility to reflect professional judgment as to how and when a job is to be done or a service is to be rendered rather than to accept patterns dictated primarily by clock and calendar. Implicit in the concept is the responsibility for librarians to become self-directing and to achieve scholarly competence in the performance of their professional duties, on a par with those of their colleagues in the classroom and laboratory. To the extent that these standards of professionalism are achieved, the categories of local and nonlocal will be rendered largely irrelevant.

While the practice of appointing library school graduates as professional members of their own university's library staff is widespread—one may say almost universal—it is coming increasingly under criticism by academic librarians. Various restrictions are being placed upon the practice, and while its elimination altogether may be neither feasible nor desirable, the reduction of the practice to a level more in keeping with that practiced by strong departments on the campus will do much to raise the standing of librarianship as a professional discipline in the academic community. The benefits to be gained by the library staff from the interaction of librarians with diverse backgrounds will improve not only the quality of the library where the practice is employed but indirectly and in time the quality of the profession as a whole.

REFERENCES

1. For a significant early study of academic status for librarians based on a survey of nearly 100 libraries, see Arthur M. McAnally, "The Dynamics of Securing Academic Status," *CRL* 18:386-95 (Sept. 1957). An excellent analysis of the question of academic standards applied to professional librarians is given by Eldred Smith, "Academic Status for College and University Librarians—Problems and Prospects," *CRL* 31:7-12 (Jan. 1970).
2. Schiller reports that 40 percent of the women librarians are married and 15 percent are faculty husbands and wives. While these fig-

ures represent a significant portion of local persons, the category should be more broadly defined to include such persons as unmarried persons living in parents' homes or those in some way bound to the community by ties which reduce or hinder mobility. Anita Schiller, *Characteristics of Professional Personnel in College and University Li-*

braries (Illinois State Library; Research Report no. 16, 1968).

3. Eldred Smith, "The Librarians' Association at the University of California," *ALA Bulletin* 63:363-68 (March 1969).
4. Evert Volkersz, "The Grievance First Step in Improved Library Government," *ALA Bulletin* 63:1566-69 (Dec. 1969).