

Letters

To the Editor:

I write to comment on the study by Bruce Kingma and Gillian McCombs, "The Opportunity Costs of Faculty Status for Academic Librarians" (*C&RL* 56 [May 1995]: 258-64). In the report's early paragraphs, definition of terms is addressed and a flawed application applied. The researchers are equating faculty status and professional activity. They do not understand fully that with or without faculty status libraries must bear the cost of sending staff to conferences, taking paid leaves, and supporting sabbaticals and professional travel. Faculty status just puts a little incentive into the mix. Where do they see the profession in the future, if indeed they see librarianship as a profession, if practicing librarians do not contribute to literature, attend conferences, and otherwise engage in activities that provide for the health and well-being of the profession? One could assume that MARC would not have been developed had not professionals stopped cataloging a few hours to talk about, learn about, write about, and travel to meetings to explore the matter of using automation to improve how librarians do their work.

This is not research on the value/cost of faculty status, it is a reckless piece that seeks to justify coping with reduced library budgets by taking advantage of a "new model" that will force librarians to be anti-intellectual, production-minded, unaware sweat shop operators urged on by unenlightened campus administrators.

Barbara J. Smith
Director

Smithsonian Institution Libraries

To the Editor:

I found the article by Bruce Kingma and Gillian McCombs to be quite interesting. Not all librarians appear to be exposed to this basic concept, so this recent contribution is welcome. However, the

authors suggest conclusions based on only half the story. Faculty status imposes costs, but its prevalence on many campuses indicates it also provides some value.

Taking Kingma and McCombs's article as the complete picture requires that we accept an argument that faculty status generates expenses, but returns no value. Instead, they imply that librarians ought to give up faculty status in favor of adopting the employee model used by computer center colleagues. This is an inappropriate conclusion since they provide no analysis to test the second premise. It may be worthwhile looking a little closer at librarianship by seeking the benefits returned the campus by the presence of faculty status.

Kingma and McCombs's vignette illustrates the potential impact of faculty status in terms of opportunity cost. However, their illustration presumes that there is more cataloging to be done than there are catalogers available to do it. They do not control budget constraints which limit the flow of new materials into the library. In those libraries that have no backlog, their point fails. No backlog occurs—there is lower opportunity cost—when all the cataloging gets done in less than the time allocated. Which, of course, leaves time for faculty development and scholarship. Alternatively, it could be said that institutions should only allocate enough cataloging labor to just catalog all new items. However, this is making a judgment on the value of faculty status before it has a chance to prove itself. Extending the authors' argument to the teaching faculty suggests that they are wasting time on scholarship, another opportunity cost. Does that imply that there is no merit in return that exceeds those costs?

Additionally, their argument should be reinforced by more complete statistical



analysis. Certainly statistical techniques offer scientific methodology appropriate to the issue. The writers lack control in their data set for libraries that have collective bargaining organizations. In one article they quote, they ignore statistical analysis showing that faculty status succeeds nearly as well as faculty unions in increasing salary gains an average six percent to ten percent. Collective bargaining across all industries seldom does better than ten percent. With that control absent, a regression analysis on the presence of faculty status will yield misleading results, because there is a negative correlation between the existence of unions and faculty status in ARL libraries. A statistical analysis by another cohort has shown librarianship, strengthened by the rigorous process of faculty status, positively affects the quality of colleges.

What is most troubling about this paper, however, has to do with editorial policy of the journal itself. Two individu-

als, widely published and highly competent statisticians, privately indicated to me their disappointment in the lack of statistical rigor allowed by the current editorial board of *College & Research Libraries*. The editors appear to be rejecting research reports out of concern that scientific (statistical) work is too sophisticated for the readership. Rather, they appear satisfied to publish work substantiated by rhetoric, anecdote, and opinion surveys.

C&RL supposedly represents the premiere research forum for academic librarianship. Hopefully, the editors can overcome their timidity regarding methodology, proven valuable in social science research, to admit material they may be uncomfortable with, such as regression analysis. In the meantime, the journal loses credibility by publishing work with incomplete analysis.

Richard W. Meyer
Director of the Library
Trinity University

Statement of ownership, management, and circulation

College & Research Libraries, ISSN 0010-0870, is published bimonthly by the Association of College and Research Libraries, American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611-2795. The editor is Gloriana St. Clair, E506 Pattee Library, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802. Annual subscription price, 25.00. Printed in U.S.A. with second-class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois. As a nonprofit organization authorized to mail at special rates (DMM Section 424.12 only), the purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes have not changed during the preceding twelve months.

Extent and nature of circulation

(Average figures denote the average number of copies printed each issue during the preceding twelve months; actual figures denote actual number of copies of single issue published nearest filing date: September 1995 issue.) Total number of copies printed: average 12,510; actual 12,760. Sales through dealers, carriers, street vendors, and counter sales: none. Mail subscription: average 11,927; actual 12,213. Free distribution: average 264; actual 319. Total distribution: average 12,191; actual 12,532. Office use, leftover, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: average 319; actual 228. Total: average 12,510; actual 12,760.

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation
(PS Form 3526, Oct. 1994) for 1995 filed with the
United States Post Office Postmaster
in Chicago, October 27, 1995.