

A guideline for the screening and appointment of academic librarians

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The following document outlines the process for hiring academic librarians. It may serve as a general checklist for administrators and search committees. However, it is critical to comply with institutional policies and procedures and state and federal laws, rules, and regulations.

I. Function of administration

The role of the personnel officer, if there is one, is to administer the hiring process for the search committee. The role and responsibility of a personnel officer may vary by institution. The administration of the search process, whether overseen by a personnel officer, committee chair, or another person, may include such documentation, which must be handled in compliance with campus, state, and national rules; travel and local arrangements; and the interview schedule. The personnel officer may serve as a regular or *ex-officio* member of all search committees, according to institutional policy.

II. Formation of search committees

The primary goal in the formation of a search committee, elected or appointed, should be to create a body representative of the constituencies affected by the position. Persons accepting appointment to the committee disqualify themselves as candidates for the position.

The administrator to whom the committee reports should give the following guidance in writing at the first meeting:

1. approximate date for submission of a list of nominees and proposed date of appointment;
2. appropriate number of finalists to be recommended;

3. affirmative action/equal opportunity requirements;
4. arrangements for payments, reimbursements, and clerical assistance;
5. procedures for documenting committee actions and preserving those records;
6. importance of confidentiality and discretion;
7. concerns specific to the position; and
8. copy of the position description, unless the committee has been charged to write the position description.

III. Development and use of the position description

At the outset of the search, the designated person or group should write (or approve) a position description with equal opportunity and affirmative action considerations in mind. The description should serve as the standard against which the candidates are judged and accurately convey to potential candidates the expectations of the position. The position description should include the following information:

1. rank and/or position title;
2. appointment status (tenure track, annual appointment etc.);
3. percent of employment if less than 100%;
4. summary of the position which details the responsibilities of the position;
5. required and preferred qualifications that address the education, experience and competencies expected of the successful candidate; and
6. special considerations.

IV. Posting the position/position announcement

The library should advertise the position within

the campus community and in appropriate regional and national publications, taking care to notify all potential groups of candidates protected by equal opportunity/affirmative action legislation. The advertisement should include:

1. a brief description of the responsibilities and qualifications,.
2. application deadline;
3. date the position is available;
4. desired start date;
5. salary and benefits;
6. name of the person to whom to submit applications; and
7. a list of items each candidate must submit.

The library should advertise in print publications, on electronic discussion lists, and on the Web; it may consider using placement centers.

V. Selection, interview, and administrative procedures

A. Selection procedures. Each search committee member will screen and evaluate applicants according to library and institution-wide policies. All applications will undergo an initial screening for compliance with the qualifications and requirements stated in the position description. Unqualified candidates will not receive further consideration.

Fair, objective, and consistent procedures should be used to narrow the field of candidates to the desired number of finalists, whom the committee will invite for interviews. The search committee should be aware of institutional guidelines and all applicable laws when developing questions to ask the candidates selected for interviews.

B. References. The search committee should solicit references only for qualified candidates under active consideration and from the list supplied by the candidate. The search committee may only contact additional referees with the candidate's permission. The search committee must hold all references in strict confidence and should advise each referee what information will be made available to the candidate in accordance with local policy and practice.

C. Interview procedures. The committee and the appropriate administrative officer shall determine the interview agenda. Interview agendas should be as similar as possible for all candidates. All parties should adhere to this schedule in the interest of time and fairness.

Candidates invited for an interview should receive a copy of the interview schedule and information about the library and its parent organization in advance of the interview. Such information may include guides to the library, promotion and tenure guidelines, organizational charts, and bylaws.

The expenses of travel, meals, and lodging for the candidates should be borne by the inviting institution, whether the interviews are held on or off campus. When this is not the practice, for example at a conference placement center, the candidate should be so appraised when an invitation is issued.

If a presentation is required of the candidates, that requirement should be clearly communicated to each candidate when the interview is first scheduled. If a topic is provided by the interviewer, it should be the same for all interviewees.

D. Administrative procedures. The responsible administrator should instruct the committee chairperson in the prompt and accurate completion of all search-related reports. Sensitive files relating to the search should be treated in accordance with laws, regulations, and local policy and practice.

VI. Communications with candidates

A. Successful candidate. Only the proper administrator should contact the successful candidate after the interview. The initial notification of selection may be oral, but the official offer should be in writing and should include the specific terms of employment.

B. Unsuccessful candidates. Letters should be sent to all unsuccessful applicants thanking them for their interest and indicating that the search has concluded. Special acknowledgement should be accorded all interviewees.

C. Miscellaneous. All active candidates should be notified if the decision is made to close or extend the search. ❧