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Career Advancement

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How to Diminish a Profession without Really Trying

By **Christopher Shaffer**

A department head was showing a recent hire around our small campus and she brought him into my office, introducing me as “The Librarian.” Shaking off images of a khaki-clad Noah Wylie, I explained that I was indeed the library’s interim director, and that our facility employed two other librarians. To my astonishment, the department head asserted that not only was I the only librarian on campus, the director had always been the only person in the library to hold that title. I reiterated that each librarian held an MLS and was, indeed, a librarian.

Her confusion stemmed from a recent transition. In March 2005, librarians at Troy University’s Dothan campus achieved faculty status. Before this time only the library director was considered faculty; the university classified all other librarians as staff. As staff, these librarians were not encouraged to publish, attend conferences, or partake of any other faculty privileges or responsibilities.

The department head’s bewilderment illustrates that a promotion to faculty status does not guarantee that either faculty or staff will accept a librarian’s new position. Librarians with newly won faculty status often face condescension from fellow faculty members who strain to accept a former staff member as a colleague. These reclassified librarians may also face animosity from staff members, their former colleagues; staff might resent that the librarians received a status denied to other deserving employees.

The librarians themselves may have difficulty adjusting to their new faculty status. Former staff librarians may balk when told they must “publish or perish.” They may also struggle to leave behind a subordinate role and act as the equal of other faculty members.

Each faculty member maintains a professional webpage that lists that faculty member’s education, publications, presentations, and courses taught. When I required each librarian to design such a page, one actually asked me why I felt the webpage was necessary. I replied, “So that other faculty members will realize that you are a faculty member, and so that you will be reminded of that fact as well.”

I do not envy any library that faces the transition I’ve seen at our library. This transition will be eliminated only when all academic librarians are assured faculty status. The library is the intellectual hub of a university. How can a librarian be anything less than a faculty member?

Christopher Shaffer graduated from the MLIS program at the University of Alabama in the summer of 2005. He is currently interim director of Troy University’s Dothan campus library.

***Library Journal* to Publish Long-Awaited Job Satisfaction Survey**

On May 1, 2007, the *Library Journal* will publish the results of its first job satisfaction survey of the 21st century. *Library Journal* solicited responses from librarians and library workers on its website. Editor-in-Chief Francine Fialkoff plans to conduct two other surveys, one on non-MLS librarians and one on librarians of color.

This survey is the second of its kind published by the *Library Journal*. *LJ* conducted a previous survey in 1994. Nearly a thousand librarians responded to that survey, developed by Cahners Research Department. *Library Journal* published the results as part of a three-part series on librarians and their profession.

That article, published in November 1994 by Senior News Editor Evan St. Lifer, proved prescient; the findings identified the issues that would challenge librarianship for the next decade, including the role of the Internet, salary discrepancy between professionals in “information technology” and “librarianship,” and a hesitancy to campaign for higher salaries.

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