



BERKELEY DIVISION

30 April 1992

THE LIBRARIAN SERIES IN THE 90'S AND BEYOND

As members of a profession accorded academic status by the University of California, librarians view performance from a broad career perspective encompassing the primary assignment as well as University service, research and other creative activity, and contributions to the profession. Maintaining an appropriate balance between the demands of the primary assignment and this broader range of activities requires a high degree of professional judgment, and finding the time and resources to engage in this broader range of activities is a continuing challenge. The overriding career goal is to demonstrate a pattern of professional growth and accomplishment in keeping with the APM's broad criteria and high performance standards.

The fiscal stringency and retrenchment of the early 1990's intensify the challenge of making appropriate career choices. In the face of spiraling costs, University support for participating in outside professional activities remains very limited and is indeed declining when measured against inflation. At the same time, demands on the primary assignment are increasing as librarians assume new and expanded responsibilities in response to restructuring and retrenchment. This seems therefore an appropriate time for librarians to take stock of the constraints and opportunities that affect their expectations as professional academic employees, and to reexamine peer review standards in this light.

It is true that budget cutbacks and staff reductions are painful and stressful, but it is also true that the decision-making that accompanies restructuring and retrenchment requires professional skill and judgment of the highest order, and the revamping of primary assignments creates opportunities for expanding professional horizons and skills. These are avenues for professional growth and accomplishment, and ought to be seen as such. In the broader arena of professional activities beyond the library, the necessity of carefully weighing and assessing these activities in light of their impact on the individual career, the library, and the profession is greater than ever. Many librarians choose to participate very actively in national professional associations and programs. While such participation is extremely important and valuable, it is only one way in a panoply of possible ways to make substantive professional contributions beyond the library. Particularly in times of fiscal stringency, it is important to remember that a fundamental principle for evaluation in the Librarian Series is quality and impact. Participation in national professional associations has no special value without evidence of quality and

impact commensurate with one's rank and step. Librarians who, in the short or long term, are not in a position to commit the considerable time and financial resources required for participation in national professional organizations should consider other ways to make substantive professional contributions.

APM criteria for advancement in the Librarian Series are intentionally broad and flexible. The criteria accommodate great diversity in career paths and professional contributions, and they can accommodate the effects of retrenchment and limited resources as well. The LAUC-B Executive Committee feels that during periods of restructuring, there is a need for all participants in the peer review process--candidates, review initiators, administrative reviewers, CAPA, ad hoc committees, and final decision makers--to display requisite flexibility in evaluating professional activities beyond the primary assignment, and to give due weight to accomplishment that involves mastering new and enlarged responsibilities in the primary assignment. There is a corollary need for candidates and review initiators to note particular constraints inhibiting outside professional activities, and for other reviewers to take these constraints into account. Acknowledging these needs gives positive, concrete meaning to the established principle that each career path is unique, that each review file presents its own particular set of circumstances, and that the proper focus in the peer review process is professional growth and accomplishment in the individual career.

The Librarian Series and the peer review process are essentially sound. No revision of librarian standards for advancement is warranted, but there is a need to exercise appropriate flexibility in their implementation. The Universitywide Task Force on Faculty Rewards arrived at a similar view regarding faculty standards for advancement. The Task Force concluded that "it is both necessary and desirable to be more flexible in interpreting and applying the criteria, both in a single review period and over an entire career path."* Such an approach is entirely in keeping with the letter and the spirit of the APM, and will best serve the long-term interests of librarians and the library.

--Prepared by the 1991/92 LAUC-B Executive Committee

*Report of the Universitywide Task Force on Faculty Rewards. Oakland: Office of the President, University of California, 1991, p. [1].

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARIANS ASSOCIATION

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BERKELEY DIVISION

12 May 1992

TO: Committee on Appointment, Promotion and Advancement
From: Rebecca G. Lhermitte Chair, LAUC-B Executive Committee RPL
RE: "The Librarian Series in the 90's and Beyond"

This letter serves to transmit a policy directive concerning peer review on the Berkeley campus. The paper was developed in response to concerns raised by librarians regarding the state of peer review standards in the face of increased workload, reduced revenues and declining morale.

Over the past two years UCB libraries and librarians have been hard hit by budgetary and staff reductions. Many librarians expressed strong concern as to how they could find the time and (fiscal) resources necessary to keep up or expand their outside professional activities while assuming an increasingly demanding work schedule.

The LAUC-B Executive Committee discussed these issues at length and consulted with the Library Administration. What appeared at first to be an issue of declining travel monies evolved into the larger issue of re-examining the criteria for merit and promotion.

We therefore want to take this opportunity to remind all participants in the peer review process that the APM criteria for merit and promotion were written to accommodate great diversity in career paths and professional contributions. Particularly during difficult periods, candidates and review initiators should explicitly acknowledge constraints inhibiting outside professional activities, and other reviewers should demonstrate requisite flexibility when evaluating professional activities beyond the primary assignment. The APM criteria are intentionally broad and flexible; the LAUC-B Executive Committee recommends that similar flexibility be utilized in their implementation. Please review the attached document with these guidelines in mind.

cc: The Vice Chancellor Heilbron
University Librarian Gregor

bcc: LAUC-B Membership

Enclosure