

ACRL Standards for Faculty Status for Academic Librarians

Revised by the ACRL Committee on the Status of Academic Librarians and approved by the ACRL Board of Directors on October 21, 2011 Approved by the ACRL Board of Directors, 2007.

Revised by the Status of Academic Librarians Standards and Guidelines Review Task Force, January 2021. Approved by the ACRL Board of Directors, April 2021.

In order to formally recognize the importance of faculty status for academic librarians and their contributions, ACRL endorses these standards. Institutions of higher education and their governing bodies are urged to adopt these standards.

To implement these standards, ACRL shall:

- publicize these standards to college and university administrators and governing bodies, academic libraries, library education programs, library organizations, and agencies that accredit institutions, and
- seek to have these standards formally adopted or endorsed by the appropriate groups listed above.

Academic Librarian status varies widely within community colleges, baccalaureate, masters and doctoral granting institutions. ACRL supports faculty rank, status, and tenure for librarians but recognizes that not all academic institutions provide faculty status to their librarians. This document seeks to unify standards and guidelines for the faculty status of academic librarians, affirming ACRL's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, regardless of the type of institution employing librarians. Faculty status may be recognized either within the library or across the institution. The following definitions apply to academic librarians with faculty status:

- Academic librarian - Librarian with an MLS/MLIS degree, employed by an institution of higher education categorized by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education classification framework, based on recent institutional data. The MLS/MLIS degree is considered the terminal degree for this appointment.
- Librarians with Faculty Status recognized by the institution - Academic librarians recognized by institutional policy as faculty with equivalent and/or parallel rights, professional responsibilities, and equivalent rank as those held by non-librarian faculty.
- Librarians with Faculty Status recognized only by the Library - Academic librarians with faculty status recognized only within the library may/may not participate in institutional shared governance, faculty compensation and promotion, and research/scholarship responsibilities and funding.

- The academic librarian makes unique contributions to the academic community and to higher education itself. Faculty Librarian institutional contributions have continued to evolve, with job descriptions which include teaching and communication skills, flexibility, and the ability to work collaboratively and independently with other strategic decision-makers within the institution. Faculty librarians are integrated classroom faculty partners, teaching information literacy concepts. Current job descriptions may call for general and specialized programming, instructional design, coding and technological skills, fluencies with multiple languages, research and outreach support, assessment, database and web design/management, metadata and bibliographic control, social media, digital scholarship, working with multi- and streaming media and makerspace resources, scholarly communication, data curation and management, archival and special collections management, assessment, equity, diversity and inclusion, and library advocacy tasks in addition to more traditional contributions. These traditional contributions include developing collections, facilitating access to OER, library resources and materials, and creating new strategies, methodologies, and tools for the academic community. Faculty Librarians may serve as research or teaching partners and facilitate scholarship as conversation and inquiry into new areas of knowledge.
- Some institutions may offer dual track appointments where some librarians are hired with Faculty Status and others are not. Some institutions may offer both full-time and part-time Faculty Librarian positions. In such situations, it must be clear to all academic librarians what the specific recruitment and appointment is for, and how that position serves the library or institution, and how that librarian is expected to perform to be successfully evaluated.
- Some institutions may offer part-time librarians Adjunct Faculty status. Librarian Adjunct Faculty status, contracts, and compensation should parallel those Adjunct Faculty appointments for non-librarian faculty. As described above, it must be clear to all academic librarians what the specific recruitment and appointment is for, and how that position serves the library or institution, and how that librarian is expected to perform to be successfully evaluated.

This standard confirms the institutional work environment for Faculty Librarians to work collegially with non-librarian faculty, and recognizes the need for academic freedom, especially in professional development and research/scholarship, and the ability to participate in library and institutional governance, to the extent offered by the practices of the institution.

1. Professional Responsibilities

Faculty Librarians must be able to exercise independent judgment, academic freedom, and agency in the performance of professional duties. Faculty Librarians should be assigned responsibilities matched to their educational competencies and the needs of the institution and reflect professional impact and judgement. They should have significant latitude in fulfilling their responsibilities. Supervisory personnel and peers should regularly and vigorously review their performance and have evidence pertaining to the performance, service, and scholarship of those being evaluated, subject to appropriate

institutional policy. Review standards and procedures should be published and uniformly applied; reviewers should have access to all appropriate documentation.

2. Governance

College and university librarians should adopt an academic form of shared governance similar in manner and structure to other faculties on the campus. The library exists to support the teaching, research/scholarship, and service functions of the institution. Thus, librarians should also participate in the enhancement of the institution's mission, curriculum, and governance. Faculty Librarians should participate in the development of policies and procedures for their library including the hiring, review, retention, and continuing appointment of their peers that define the nature of their work and responsibilities. Having a Librarians Organization or similar structure to affirm and promote the role of librarians within the institution has merits and allows for communication of the activities of the Faculty Senate or equivalent governing body.

Faculty Librarians should be eligible for membership in the faculty senate or equivalent governing body. They should have the same degree of representation as other faculty on all college or university governing bodies.

3. Compensation and Contracts

Salaries and fringe benefits should be comparable to and within the range of those paid to non-librarian faculty of equivalent rank with equivalent education, experience, and responsibility. Salary scales should be adjusted in an equitable manner to contract period and full- or part-time status, as indicated.

All faculty librarians should have written contracts or agreements consistent with institutional policy. Faculty librarians should be appointed by a written contract of no less than one academic year, unless it is for a short-term replacement, such as a visiting professor appointment, or one that meets a temporary staffing need. The contract should state the terms and conditions of service and grant security of employment for the contractual period. After a period of no longer than seven years and through a process which includes peer review, librarians should be granted continuing employment if they have met the appropriate conditions and standards.

Faculty Librarians who assume additional responsibilities within the organization for an interim period should have job descriptions, compensation/release time, and workload reviewed by supervisory and/or peers consistent to the practices of the institution.

4. Promotion and Tenure

Faculty Librarians should be promoted in rank based on their professional proficiency and effectiveness (performance, service, and scholarship) consistent with stated faculty institutional standards. The peer review system should be an integral part of procedures for promotion, whether final decisions are made within the Library or externally by a campus/institutional review process. Procedures for promotion and/or tenure should include a peer review at regular annual, biannual, or triannual intervals based on their initial rank and appointment, reflecting previous experience. Faculty

Librarians should have ranks equivalent to those of the non-librarian faculty where they are eligible for promotion, such as Assistant Professor, to Associate Professor to Full Professor.

The Faculty Librarian promotion process must provide protection against illegal or unconstitutional discrimination by the institution, or discrimination on a basis not demonstrably related to the Faculty Librarian's professional performance, including but not limited to race, color, religion or creed, gender expression, age, national origin or ancestry, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, military or veteran status, pregnancy, political affiliation, or citizenship status.

Faculty Librarians should be covered by a stated tenure policy like non-librarian faculty, as applicable by institution. Contracts for non-tenured Faculty Librarians should be renewed in an equitable manner, following similar guidelines to non-tenured, non-librarian Faculty.

[The ACRL Standards for the Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure of Academic Librarians](#) is intended for use in the context of librarians with or without faculty status. The objective of this Guideline is to propose criteria and procedures for appointment, promotion in academic rank, and tenure (continuous appointment) for use in academic libraries. Utilizing these criteria and procedures will ensure that the library faculty and, therefore, library services will be of the highest quality possible.

5. Professional Development and Research/Scholarship Funds

Sabbatical and other research/scholarship leaves and/or release time should be available to librarians consistent with institutional standards for non-librarian faculty. Faculty Librarians should be eligible for internal and external research/scholarship and travel funding, research/scholarship projects, and professional development consistent with faculty institutional standards. These engagements and opportunities should reflect the professional judgment of the librarians in order that they can continue to grow in their positions and be of the greatest benefit to the institution.

6. Academic Freedom

Faculty Librarians are entitled to the protection of academic freedom. Censorship of any type is unacceptable whether individual or organizational. As Faculty Librarians they must be free to provide access to information regardless of content.

7. Dismissal or Termination

Dismissal or termination of an appointment may be made by the institution for just cause and through academic due process. The process for the dismissal of Faculty Librarians should be consistent with institutional policy and/or labor negotiations for other Faculty dismissals, and should involve adequate notice, peer review, and access to a grievance procedure.

[The ACRL Standards for the Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure of Academic Librarians](#) outlines recommended processes and criteria for the termination of appointment, grievance filing, dismissal procedures, action by the institutional governing board, procedures for imposition of sanctions other than dismissal, and terminal salary or notice.

8. Grievance/Appeals Process

Faculty Librarians should have access to the same grievance/appeals process as other faculty which include a list of grievable issues, procedures to be completed within specified time limits, safeguards against reprisal by the institution, and abuse of the procedures by the grievant. The process must be consistent with applicable institutional regulations and/or labor negotiation contracts.