PRODUCTION NOTE

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library
Academic Status for the Professional Library Staff

of the University of Illinois.

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The purpose of this paper is to review the discussions and procedures involved in transferring the professional members of the library staff of the University of Illinois from the nonacademic university civil service to academic status. In doing this it supplements articles which have dealt primarily with the position of staffs in university libraries generally and with the features of the scheme devised at the University of Illinois. The account is based on a paper prepared at the University of Illinois Library School.

Civil service status for the professional librarians came in 1911, when state civil service was established on the University of Illinois campus. For the following thirty years the librarians were dissatisfied with its operation in recruiting new staff members and with the staff's position in the university family.

A summary of the reasons for this attitude portrays how inadequately the system worked in the employment of professional librarians. The Civil Service Act established an eligible list to which applicants who were residents of Illinois were admitted on passing an examination. Often when a vacancy was to be filled there would be no one on the list, in which case the library could hire librarians directly. This led to a continuous effort to evade the civil service procedure. Many applicants resented the test because they could be appointed to positions of relative importance at other universities without such an ordeal. The professional staff, especially the heads of the departments, felt that the civil service authorities were not sufficiently familiar with the requirements of the library to administer properly an examination which would evaluate a candidate in terms of his education, experience, and personality, and which would assign him to his proper place in the eligible list. Because the responsibility for some aspects of the personnel administration of the library staff lay outside the library, inefficiency resulted in many cases. Moreover, since the civil service procedure operated slowly in filling vacancies, often incompetent help had to be employed temporarily. Another dissatisfaction was that the classification of positions failed to recognize the specialized services performed by members of the professional staff. Thus it happened in one instance that a children's librarian was appointed to the position of cataloger. All of these factors lowered morale and impaired the quality of the staff.
To eliminate these abuses and to establish their position as an educational part of the university, the librarians advocated inclusion in the academic group. Few universities at the time accorded academic status to professional librarians except in the case of head officers, however, university trustees and presidents being slow in recognizing their point of view.

The Job Analysis

The first positive effort undertaken to secure a better system of staff appointment was a job analysis of each position, made in 1940. At this time the new director of the library, who was interested in solving the problem, called several meetings of the heads of departments and the assistants to the director. The group felt that in order to insure the highest professional standards some change should be considered. In order to make valid recommendations it was decided to secure a complete picture of the positions within the library. The job analysis was the means chosen.

The device adopted was work diaries, which recorded the tasks of each person and the amount of time devoted to each entry. A sampling of twenty days scattered between October 1 and January 15 was taken, to allow for seasonal variations. All members of the library staff, including those under appointment by the Board of Trustees, participated with the heads of departments and other supervisors in keeping the diaries. They were instructed in the purpose of compiling the records and the importance of being clear and concise in their statements. Thousands of the descriptions of tasks are on file in the office of the assistant university librarian for personnel.

Formation of the Library Committee on Staff and Civil Service

The next important step was the creation by the director of the library of the Library Committee on Staff and Civil Service. This committee spent hours in studying the problem and investigating all its phases. To evolve accurate job descriptions was the first major purpose. Another aim was to formulate a forward-looking program of personnel administration that would provide for the most efficient operation of the library. The director hoped that out of the committee's work recommendations would develop which could be considered by the Illinois Civil Service Commission.

Since the job descriptions were to be the basis for its recommendations, the committee commenced by studying the diaries. Involved in the formation of adequate descriptions was the assembling of all the work diaries of each individual and the setting up of categories of duties in order to obtain a sharp profile of his position. Members were assigned diaries of positions with which they were unfamiliar. In drawing up the profiles they kept in mind that the terminology should be comprehensible to nonprofessional people; the service rendered to undergraduates, graduates, and the faculty should be differentiated both quantitatively and qualitatively; intralibrary cooperation should be emphasized; and professional and nonprofessional duties should be distinguished. Allowance was made for time lost through interruptions. To bring the purpose of the job analysis and job description into accord, the committee deviated when necessary from the principle of describing the positions and used the individual as the basis. In order to clarify portions of
the report, the compiler was permitted to consult the individuals concerned. After the profiles were completed, the committee set up tentative classifications of the positions.

Completion of the Job Analysis

Finally in March 1942 a subcommittee of the Library Committee on Staff and Civil Service had completed the analysis of the work diaries, and for all positions had drawn up definitions, examples of duties and responsibilities, and statements of minimum qualifications and personal attributes. The temporary groupings in which professional library positions were placed were library assistant, junior librarian, senior librarian, senior library assistant, library associate, and senior library associate. In concluding its report the committee stated that the posts in the six mentioned categories should be exempt from civil service. Sent first to the director of the library, the report was later forwarded to the administration of the university. Among the benefits gained from the job analysis and the job descriptions were that they provided a clear outline of the duties performed by the staff and led to delegation of many tasks to clerical help; also that they clarified the thinking of the librarians about their relationship to research and teaching.

Amendment of the State Civil Service Act

Of decisive importance in assisting the librarians’ efforts to end the civil service status was the passage of an amendment to the state Civil Service Act on July 22, 1941. Under this the Board of Trustees was to classify all nonacademic positions in the university in civil service, excepting those of the president, officers of the board, administrators, and professional and scientific officers. It also had the responsibility of establishing the rules and regulations of a university civil service system.

Shortly after the passage of the amendment the president of the university, in a communication to deans, directors, and heads of academic and administrative departments, announced that the personnel then under state civil service would automatically constitute the classified civil service of the university. Rules and classifications would be established in the near future, with all departmental classifications to be reviewed by a university committee. From the new system the president hoped to derive higher qualifications for candidates, the university's own classification system, and the opportunity to select candidates from its own eligible lists rather than from those of the state Civil Service Commission.

In October of 1941, the Board of Trustees appointed a Committee on Civil Service composed of an assistant professor of economics as chairman, the bursar as executive secretary, and the dean of the College of Agriculture, the director of the physical plant, and an assistant professor of law. The committee was to draft rules for selection and administration of the university civil service. Any recommendations for a change in the status of the librarians would be examined by this committee.

At the time of the passage of the amendment the director of the library
was under the impression that some of the positions in the library would be removed from civil service under the provision made for the exemption of "professional" positions. However, at the time the regulations of the system were established, the professional staff members were included. When the library staff received blanks for civil service members the director immediately sought clarification of the university's policy concerning the definition of "professional."

The Report of the Library Committee

In compliance with the purpose of formulating recommendations for an efficient personnel program for the library staff, the Library Committee on Staff and Civil Service prepared an extensive report presenting its arguments and conclusions. The first part included a list of proposed principles for staff management. Designed to retain the advantages of civil service but to remove the objections, the statement suggested that the authority for personnel management reside in the director of the library, subject to the approval of the president of the university; that professional staff members have faculty rank suited to the duties performed; and that it should be possible to select such staff members from the entire country.

The committee believed certain library positions should be excluded from civil service under the provision in the amendment which exempted professional staff, but that others, including the library's clerical workers, should remain under its jurisdiction. In drawing a line of demarcation, the committee suggested that all positions which required the employee to have been graduated from a library school be granted the academic status which the salaries and duties justified, and those similar to other clerical jobs on the campus remain within university civil service. Under this definition a majority of the library staff would be included in the professional group. With the change of the administration of civil service from the state to the university, there was opportunity to grant the professional library staff a status equal to that of the faculty and scientific staff.

One of the committee's strongest arguments was based on the educational preparation of the professional library staff, which equaled or excelled that of many who possessed academic rank. Through a survey the committee discovered that all the librarians whom it desired to classify as professional possessed a bachelor's degree in library science, which required one year's work beyond college graduation. Over half of the staff had two to four years of professional training, with seven members holding advanced degrees in subject fields. Furthermore, these librarians had received their education in schools which were organized on a graduate level and granted professional degrees. If the professional library positions were divided into four grades according to salary range, they would parallel the academic classifications of instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, and professor.

In support of their desire for change, the group contended that work in librarianship was not only professional but also academic in nature. With the emphasis in college and universities less on lecture and textbooks methods and more on the use of library materials, librarians were increasingly
responsible for making the resources of libraries available to undergraduates, graduates, and faculty. Thus the library staff complemented the teaching faculty by integrating the activities of the library with other aspects of instruction.

In its report the committee enumerated the grievances concerning civil service which already have been mentioned. Additional objections cited were that it set up unnecessary hurdles for the graduates of library schools, and the claim that civil service employees often lack the initiative and enthusiasm needed to coordinate a staff into an efficient body.

After surveying different methods of selecting and employing professional staff members having proper qualifications, the committee concluded that the best method was to place the authority in the hands of the director of the library. It requested, therefore, that the professional library positions be removed from the nonacademic civil service classification and included within the academic group.

**Statement of the Director**

Hoping to obtain a favorable definition of the term "professional" as used in the amendment to the state Civil Service Act, the director of the library prepared for the University Committee on Civil Service a statement concerning civil service and the library, and included with it the report of the library committee. In his memorandum he enumerated three proposals intended to meet the letter and the spirit of the law and the requirements of sound university policy. The first recommended that all persons who held civil service appointments be placed in the classified service of the university—a provision necessary to insure that those under civil service would not lose their privileges. As the amendment excluded professional positions from the university civil service, the director asked in his second proposal that the university apply this provision to professional members of the library staff. He then urged that librarianship be recognized as a profession because it renders specialized service to a community, a code of ethics has been accepted by it as a guide, associations have been set up to improve its work, librarians receive salaries, and certification laws are established to insure the qualifications of workers. His third suggestion was that the university enable those holding professional appointments not under civil service to gain permanent tenure, and thus to insure that this condition of civil service would not be circumvented.

The director pointed out that while the professional staff could be included within civil service, it was more in keeping with the intent and spirit of the law to exempt it. He believed that by not grouping the professional library staff with civil service, better personnel management could be provided. Another advantage he saw was that professional positions could be treated as a homogeneous group, thereby according the staff dignity and security. Finally, removal from civil service would be consistent with maintenance of a library school by the university, and end the situation in which persons to whom that school granted professional degrees could not be employed at the professional level in the university library.
The Decision of the Administration

After careful consideration, especially of the interpretation of the civil service law as it applied to the nonacademic staff, the University Committee on Civil Service, the president, and the Board of Trustees reached the following decisions about the relation of the library staff to civil service. Each individual under civil service was to retain this status, but recommendations for removal of a few key positions from civil service would be taken up. As posts filled by civil service appointments became vacant, the new employees and the positions would be considered for exemption, providing the places were academic in character and their number very limited. Suggestions of appropriate academic titles for the exempt positions would be reviewed. Upon the recommendation of the University Committee on Civil Service, which had studied the job descriptions, the titles junior library assistant, library assistant, senior library assistant, and principal library assistant were approved.

Testing University Civil Service

The staff and heads of the departments were disappointed over the outcome, but in operating under the system they sought to measure its merits. The consensus was that although there were improvements, it was unsatisfactory because salaries were inadequate, an examination still was necessary, and if a candidate could not be supplied the library had to obtain a release enabling it to hire a staff member. Another source of discontent was the fact that the professional librarians were now more closely associated with the nonacademic group.

Throughout the entire effort for transference, the staff and the heads of the departments studied the question extensively--reading the literature on the problem, corresponding with other colleges and universities, and consulting with officers of the American Library Association. Faculty members helped by writing letters attesting the assistance provided by the librarians in teaching and in research. The staff of the Library School registered its disappointment in a letter addressed to the president of the university. In addition to many of the arguments cited in the report of the Library Committee on Staff and Civil Service, this faculty stressed the fact that it was detrimental to staff morale to have professional workers classed as "clerical." Its final suggestion was that temporarily the university library staff should be reclassified as "professional" or as a "professional library group of the university civil service," and have its own representative on the recently created Civil Service Council.

This council, formally known as the Urbana Employee Council of the University Committee on Civil Service, was established to assist the Civil Service Committee. The members were the assistant director of the Information Office; a janitor; a power plant employee; the journalism librarian, as a representative of the clerical-library office; a physical plant representative; and an electrician, with the last two being nominated for membership on the University Committee on Civil Service.
The Librarians' Association

Of significance in the second attempt to transfer the professional librarians to academic status was the organization on October 19, 1942, of the Librarians' Association. Its importance lay not only in crystallizing the opinion of the library staff but in demonstrating that the staff supported the director of the library. Membership in the association was open to all staff members who possessed professional degrees or had completed one year's work at a library school. The founders debated whether the aims of the organization should include more than the removal of the staff from civil service. It was decided that the ultimate purpose should be to promote high standards of library service in relation to the university program, to foster the professional interests of the members, and to afford an opportunity for organized expression on staff problems.

Because the group was disturbed by the lack of a representative on the Urbana Employee Council, it empowered the Executive Committee of the association to draft and send a letter to the president of the university, requesting that the professional library staff be included in the academic group on the campus. As an alternative in case this action failed, it approved a secondary plan whereby the Executive Committee would address the University Committee on Civil Service, asking separate classification for the librarians and separate representation on the Civil Service Committee and on the Urbana Employee Council.

In its letter the Executive Committee requested the president to reconsider the status of the library staff, on the ground that its services were professional and academic; that its education requirements related it to the academic group; and that any improvement in its status would benefit the institution. In reply the president of the university informed the association that further consideration would be given the request, and subsequently he consulted with the chairman of the Civil Service Committee and with the director of the library.

After meeting with the president the director prepared a report, proposing that the library staff be given a different status under civil service. After indicating that according to the organization charts of the University Committee on Civil Service and the Employee Council the librarians were classed in the "clerical group," he suggested that all university positions which required the personnel to hold a bachelor's degree be included within the "professional group." Also he mentioned the feeling of the library staff that the Civil Service Committee and the Employee Council were dominated by the large representation of physical plant members.

Objections to Civil Service

Since the president of the university had expressed interest in the objections of the members of the Librarians' Association to civil service, the director of the library requested that the organization enumerate the faults as it then saw them. In a summary the association pointed out that it is unfortunate not to have the personnel administration of the library reside in the hands of the director, who is more intimately acquainted with the
library and its needs than the University Committee on Civil Service and the Business Office can be. It added that as a result of being classified as clerical, rather than professional, the librarians felt that under civil service their staff morale had been lowered; that the civil service regulations for sick leaves and vacations did not meet standards established by the America Library Association; and that state residence requirements, the method of announcing examinations, and the need of passing an examination limited the opportunity of recruiting and selecting the best qualified candidates. Regarding the residence requirement the Executive Committee of the association believed that even though this condition might be waived through the device of designating library positions as "technical" a system which could be rendered practical only by exceptions to its basic principles was unsound.

The association added that the sole method for promotion and recognition under civil service, i.e., the passing of an examination, did not take account of the contributions to periodicals and participation in professional organizations which ordinarily are associated with the professional development of librarians; and that after individuals had achieved security within the civil service framework they tended to stagnate, and could not be transferred. It alleged further that the salary scale was inadequate; for whereas most civil service positions had a $600 range, the spread in the junior library assistant and library assistant classifications was only $300, and while a maximum of $3,000 had been established for principal library assistant, the majority of nonlibrary positions requiring the same amount of education and experience had a minimum of $3,000. In concluding the committee stated that while the main argument for civil service was that it provided permanent tenure, during the war even this had been suspended, so that the library had the disadvantages of the system without its major asset. Because of the weaknesses enumerated, the members of the Librarians' Association wanted to be separated completely from civil service.

Reply of the Chairman of the Civil Service Committee

After being received by the president, the letter of the director of the library and the statement of the Librarians' Association were forwarded for comment to the chairman of the University Committee on Civil Service. The chairman recognized that the interests and the problems of the librarians were not the same as those of the clerical group, but he did not feel that there was sufficient reason for special representation on the Employee Council, because the librarians did not constitute as much as one-seventh of the civil service employees on the Urbana campus. Moreover, if they did have their own representative, it would not insure that he would be chosen to speak for the council on the Civil Service Committee.

The chairman disapproved constituting a "professional group" including other professional people, as he did not consider that there existed a large enough similarity between employment problems of the librarians and others. Furthermore, he attempted to answer the objections of the Librarians' Association. In doing so he expressed the belief that the director had considerable control of the personnel administration, since that office had been asked to prepare and grade the examinations given the candidates, and could choose from the top three names on the eligible list. As far as he knew, the librarians
had never been labeled "clerical" except for the purpose of classification in the Urbana Employee Council. He admitted that vacations had been curtailed, but pointed out that this was attributable to the accelerated war program of the university. Finally, he stated that while sick leaves were less liberal than those of the academic personnel, the Committee on Civil Service realized that fact and was working on the problem.

Although the chairman granted that the requirement of state residence limited somewhat the selection of library personnel, he saw no reason positions could not be regarded as "technical" to waive the stipulation, and could not understand what objection there was to being classified as in civil service. If the civil service program did not provide advancement for professional improvement, he believed the promotional examinations should be revised and weighted to take account of the intellectual growth, the training, and the experience of librarians. He felt that initiative had not been stifled, the evidence being that under the system large numbers had been advanced in rank in recognition of their value to the university. In regard to the narrow salary range for one group, the chairman admitted there were discrepancies, but felt the individuals affected would be promoted rapidly to the next classification. To the claim that no secure tenure existed under civil service, the chairman stated that the civil service bill had been amended so that university employment begun during the war would be permanent.

Believing that such objections as were valid were directed at details in administration, the chairman held that the Committee on Civil Service would be willing to reconsider its decision upon the recommendation of the director of the library. Also, the salary scale could be readjusted at any time for a civil service position if a department head recommended it. In conclusion, he stated that it would be a mistake to remove the librarians from civil service then, but that if the Board of Trustees should amend the university statutes so librarians could be included in the academic staff, the Civil Service Committee might be willing to regard the librarians as academic and exempt from civil service.

Review of the Problem for the New Director

In September 1943 the library acquired a new director. Reviewing what had been done to secure academic status, and explaining the communication of the chairman of the Civil Service Committee, the assistant university librarian for personnel prepared a lengthy report for him. She expressed the firm conviction that faculty status was the only plan under which the library staff could operate properly. She further apprehended that although the Civil Service Committee would accept a decision of the president and the Board of Trustees to grant librarians academic rank, its belief that this would be a mistake at the time might force the president to make a negative decision. Then the assistant university librarian for personnel outlined answers to the chairman's letter, repeating the dissatisfactions resulting from the position of the professional library staff under civil service. A significant argument she cited against the small range in salaries for junior library assistant and library assistant was that not enough positions existed to facilitate transfer or promotion. If the salary range was $600 instead of $300, a person who was performing more than satisfactory work, but for whom
no promotion nor transfer was available, could receive recognition through an increase in salary. Concerning the statement that civil service appointments were temporary, the assistant university librarian for personnel claimed the Librarians' Association had not been informed of the amendment in the civil service bill at the time it compiled the reasons for dissatisfaction with civil service. Finally, she pointed out that the library staff was in a peculiar situation because of being considered too big to be exempt from civil service, and too small for adequate representation on the Civil Service Committee.

The Approval of the Civil Service Committee

The new director played an important role in bringing the drive for academic status to a successful conclusion. Approaching the touchy problem tactfully but forcefully, he enlisted the backing of the faculty and met with the president and the Civil Service Committee several times.

After consideration of all the correspondence and recommendations about the status of the librarians under civil service, the chairman of the University Committee on Civil Service concluded that the professional librarians were part of the academic staff of the university. He urged that, as the civil service of the university was for nonacademic personnel, the library positions should be removed from civil service. The methods for accomplishing this were either to change the university statutes so that the president could grant to individual members of the library staff academic rank, or to include the librarians expressly within the academic staff of the university; and the chairman suggested that the latter plan would be the more desirable. As an expedient for presentation of this to the Board of Trustees, he outlined two steps. First, the Civil Service Committee should recommend that the library positions be considered academic in nature and removed from civil service. Next, the university statutes should be amended to include the librarians within the definition of academic staff.

The director of the library, on February 1, 1944, appeared before the Committee on Civil Service and recommended that the professional librarians be placed in the academic staff. In principle the committee approved the change, with the understanding that certain revisions would be made in the university statutes to account for the shift in the librarians' status. To its recommendation it attached proposed changes in the university statutes. Preliminary consideration of the alterations was given by the university council, which approved them June 16, 1944. The recommendation and the suggested modifications then were submitted to the president of the university in order that he could present them to the Board of Trustees.

Final Approval

At the meeting of June 22, 1944, the Board of Trustees, upon the advice of the president, adopted the changes in the university statutes whereby the librarians became part of the academic staff. In August the bursar of the university distributed blanks on which the librarians who desired to relinquish their civil service status might indicate this.
With the final achievement of academic status, many policies had to be established. In an article entitled "Academic Status for University Librarians—a New Approach" in College and Research Libraries, January 1946, R. B. Downs, director of the University of Illinois Library beginning 1943, told of the working out of these policies and summarized the resulting plan. After several years of effort the University of Illinois Library had secured a more flexible personnel system, which enabled the director of the library to appoint professional librarians to positions of academic rank from any part of the country, without examination.

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