The Community College Conundrum: Workforce Issues in Community College Libraries

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Abstract

Until recently, community colleges have been an overlooked segment of higher education. A recent Brookings Institution report labeled them an "invisible institution" (Goldrick-Rab, 2009, § 1). To many students, however, community colleges are not invisible, as an increasing number of undergraduates attend and/or graduate from two-year institutions. Much like the institutions themselves, community college libraries are similarly unnoticed, particularly in terms of workforce issues that distinguish community college libraries from their academic library counterparts at four-year institutions. Preparation for and recruitment into community college librarianship, for example, have their own unique challenges. Issues of career tracking, tenure/contracts, retention, and professional development are also different for community college librarians. This article examines the particular issues that are most critical to community college libraries, including efforts to increase the visibility of community college librarianship as a career and community college libraries as a distinct yet vital element in the landscape of academic libraries.

Introduction

Until recently, community colleges have in many ways been an overlooked segment of higher education; a recent Brookings Institution report labeled them as "invisible institutions" (Goldrick-Rab, 2009, § 1). Community college libraries suffer from a similar lack of visibility, particularly in terms of workforce issues that distinguish community college libraries from their academic library counterparts at four-year institutions. This article seeks to identify and provide an overview of those professional and

workplace issues that render community college librarianship a distinct practice within the larger field of academic librarianship. A review of the literature particular to community colleges and that addresses librarians, libraries, and patrons reveals both subtle and significant differences for community college librarians in terms of large and small case employment requirements, conditions, and experiences.

In scope, this article will provide a general overview of the most prominent workforce issues explored primarily in the literature of the last ten years that focuses on issues particular to the practice of community college librarianship. Recruitment, tenure/contracts, retention, librarian-faculty relationships, and professional development represent particular workforce issues for which there are significant differences from other types of academic libraries. In addition to these large scale employment concerns, the day-to-day workplace activities of community college librarians (reference, instruction, collection development, among others) often clearly differ in degree and content from those same activities within a four-year academic library.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A BRIEF HISTORY

Community colleges are widely recognized as being a twentieth-century phenomenon; the first community college opened its doors in 1901 in Joliet, Illinois. That first institution, Joliet Junior College, was essentially an extension of high school, designed to expose students to college-level coursework prior to matriculation at a university. The intention of the first community college and those that closely followed was to separate the first two preparatory years of college from the subject-specific and rigorous final two years (Johnston, 1994). The vocational and continuing education components of community colleges developed over time (continuing education encompasses personal enrichment courses and corporate training programs). The terminology also changed as the two-year college concept matured. Early in the history of community colleges, the term *junior college* applied to private two-year schools, while the term *community college* referred to public institutions (Johnston, 1994, p. 4). Community college is now the standard nomenclature, and "junior college" has largely fallen out of favor. The term *technical college* or *city college* may also be used to describe a two-year college (Johnston, p. 4).

The first community colleges did not have libraries of their own, instead, they relied upon the high school library to serve students. Libraries were established only after student complaints that they were disadvantaged in their junior and senior years in college by the lack of an appropriate library and inadequate research sources. By 1930, the Junior College section of the Association of College and Research Libraries published the first set standards for library service at two-year institutions. In 1934, the Carnegie Corporation established an advisory group on junior

college libraries. As they developed, community college libraries were often termed *Learning Resource Centers* or *Learning Resource Programs*—largely because in community colleges, traditional library services were combined with audiovisual and media services (Johnston, 1994). Contemporarily, both terms are still used, though library is becoming the dominant terminology (Dowell, 2006).

By the early 1970s, the comprehensive community college that we recognize today was in full form, and community colleges were gaining ground in the higher education market: "Their campuses were among the best in the land, and as community centers they served a large segment of the public. The faculty and administrators were well educated, and many of their leaders were graduates of major university leadership programs. Federal policies and groups, such as the Carnegie Commission for Higher Education, encouraged continuation by disciplined expansion" (Tillery & Deegan, 1985, p. 16). Once firmly established, community colleges entered a period of rapid growth. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (http://nces.ed.gov) reports that between the years 1974–75 and 2006–7, the number of community colleges in the United States increased from 896 to a total of 1,045, a 17 percent increase (NCES, 2008). The NCES (2008) survey also indicates that by 2006–7, U.S. community colleges enrolled 6.2 million students, some 35 percent of total undergraduates enrolled in college that year. The Brookings Institute reports that in the five-year period from 2001 to 2006, total enrollment in community colleges grew by 2.3 million students, a rate of increase higher than any other segment of the education market (Goldrick-Rab, Harris, Mazzeo, & Kienzl, 2009). That same report indicates that community colleges are present in almost every U.S. community, enrolling close to half (45 percent) of the nation's undergraduate population, and even higher proportions of minority students and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Golrick-Rab et al., 2009). It is important to note that community college systems vary by state. The largest state system of community colleges is California's, with 110 community colleges and 1.4 million students. The smallest systems include Rhode Island, Vermont, Alaska, and Nevada, which are home to one or two community colleges.

Workforce issues in community college libraries can be divided in two broad organizational categories: (1) large-scale employment issues, that is, "big picture" concerns, that impact community college libraries as institutions and the profession as whole (funding, recruitment, retention, employment status) and (2) day-to-day activities that define what it means to practice community college librarianship (reference, instruction, collection development, etc).

INSTITUTION AND PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE ISSUES

Funding

Though funding is clearly an issue across all of higher education, the nature and types of financial support received by community colleges ensure that fiscal concerns are particularly critical for two-year institutions. The Brookings Institute reports that more than 60 percent of two-year colleges are fully public institutions, while only 25 percent of four-year institutions are fully public (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2009). The primary source of funding for community colleges is state and local government (many community colleges receive a certain percentage of funding from their county or other local government entity, which often support facility and utility costs). This results in a certain fiscal vulnerability: "Community colleges rely on states and localities for the lion's share (nearly 60 percent nationally) of their revenues. Such dependence on state and local dollars makes colleges particularly susceptible to fluctuations in the economy and, thus, state and local budgets" (Goldrick-Rab et al., p.12).

Funding issues at the institutional level clearly trickle down to the library itself, particularly during periods of economic downturn or recessions. The July 2009, California community college budget called for a 100 percent cut to the funding used to pay for electronic resources (S. Bell, 2009). Sources of funding for the library also vary across community colleges. Some libraries receive support from within their institution, and some receive support directly from state government, which then passes through the college's financial office to the library. Whatever the differences in funding, what is true across two-year institutions is that library funding has not kept pace with the rapid growth of enrollment, campuses, and programs. This has been the case during the current economic recession, as well prior to the recent economic downturn. In North Carolina, community colleges are seeing enrollment growth in the double digits and budget cuts in the same range (Thomas, 2009). Cuts to library funding at the state level have been even more extreme, with cuts ranging from less than 10 percent to over 40 percent (the Central Piedmont Community College Libraries received a 43 percent cut in materials funding provided by the state). Karp (2006) notes that the "lack of community college literature decrying small budgets may be because community college libraries have always dealt with inadequate budgets" (p. 264).

There is also a disparity in federal funding between two- and four-year schools. Universities receive more than three times as much per full-time student in federal support as do community colleges (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2009). Cuts to state and local budgets combined with rapid enrollment growth suggest an economic environment in which this funding disparity will continue and likely expand without direct intervention at the federal level (Goldrick-Rab et al.). According to the American Association

of Community Colleges (http://www.aacc.nche.edu), the Obama Administration's American Graduation Initiative does aim to address some of the large-scale issues of community college funding by providing twelve billion dollars in federal funding to community colleges, with the hope of producing five million new graduates by the year 2020. Though recent student aid legislation appeared to leave out the community college funding proposed in the American Graduation Initiative, college leaders are still hopeful that funding disparities will be addressed (Moltz, 2010).

Recruitment and Retention of Community College Librarians
Recruitment of community college librarians is somewhat of a thorny issue, since few library schools specifically address community college librarianship. A review of the course offerings at the top twenty programs in Library Science as ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* reveals little content focused on community colleges. The Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is one program that offers an emphasis in community college librarianship. This is perhaps related to a general perception of community colleges as the equivalent to the first half of a university education (Lendy, 2009). The mission of community colleges, however, is broader. Community colleges offer a wide variety of programs (GED, Adult High School, and applied vocational programs—welding, HVAC, etc.) and services that have no equivalent at four-year institutions, and which require different kinds of library services and outreach. As a recruiting brochure for University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign indicates, "Librarianship in community colleges can be multi-faceted, incorporating elements of academic, school, and public library service."

The issue of the academic, social, and political reputation of community colleges in higher education cannot be overlooked in any discussion of the recruitment of community college librarians. Poole (2000) notes that community colleges "have a reputation of being on the bottom rung or lower tier of the American higher education system. Although many have been providing inexpensive but quality education for decades, they are often regarded as stepchildren in the intellectual world. . . . The academic elite tend to view community colleges as less worthy of serious scholarly attention" (pp. 486–487). Community colleges are typically viewed as less rigorous institutions for students, faculty, and librarians, a viewpoint that largely arises from the focus on workforce development, vocational education, and remedial education (Lendy, 2009). Goldrick-Rab (2009) reports that pejorative terms such as "junior," "second chance," "sub-baccalaureate" and institutions of "continued dependency, unrealistic aspirations, and wasted general education" have all been applied to community colleges (§ 1). Lendy (2009) cites the work of Alfred and Horowitz (1990), finding that community colleges are "at or near the bottom of

the postsecondary educational hierarchy," perceptions that are based on "prestige, cost, selectivity and purpose" (Lendy, p. 93).

This perception also stems from media coverage, or lack thereof, of community colleges. Goldrick-Rab (2009) reports on media coverage of education, finding that of the 1 percent of national coverage dedicated to education as a whole, just over 2 percent focused on community colleges. Thus the term *invisible institutions*, since for the mainstream media, community colleges are essential nonexistent (Goldrick-Rab, § 1). Images of community colleges in popular culture (NBC's sitcom *Community*) tend to reinforce negative perceptions of the schools and their student bodies. The combination of a general lack of visibility and negative perceptions seems to effect recruitment of academic librarians into community colleges. There is little evidence in the professional literature that reveals library school students expressing a desire to pursue careers in community college librarianship.

Community college students are often seen as students who are not academically prepared for college-level work and who are not likely to be admitted to a four-year institution. This perception has an element of truth, part of which is a result of community colleges' status as "open door" or "open access" institutions, meaning they accept all who apply. Students whose placement scores fall below standards of college-level work are placed in developmental courses to bring them up to college level. In 1994, the typical community college student was described as attending "college part time and is a woman 28 years old. She is from a middle to lower economic background, achieved lower high school grades academically . . ." (Johnston, 1994, p. 31). In terms of academic achievement, community colleges enrolled 46 percent of high school seniors with a grade average of B- or below while its four-year counterpart enrolled only 25 percent. Less than 10 percent of high school seniors with an A grade average enrolled in community college (Johnston, 1994). That reality, however, is changing. A 2008 study by the NCES compared 2004 community college enrollees with their 1992 counterparts, and found that the 2004 cohort included a greater percentage of academically well-prepared students, based on both standardized test scores and classroom achievement.

As a result of this reputation, potential community college librarians may have concerns about opportunities for scholarly activity (research, conference presentations, and publishing) and professional development, as well as the nature of reference questions and instructional content. Though the concern is not unfounded, the issue is complex. Poole (2000) reports that for the most part, community college librarians "do not face the same kind of publication and tenure pressures faced by library faculty in other segments of higher education" (p. 486). This may mean that funding for travel for conferences and training may not be as abundant as in four-year institutions with tenure or promotion requirements

that demand such creative activity by librarians. Limited travel funding has been an expressed concern of community college librarians (Cast, 2000). Of course, without strict tenure and publication requirements, potential funding issues may shrink in importance. This is not to say that community colleges are not supportive of the research, publishing, and presenting activities of their librarians. Poole (2000) reports of numerous opportunities for funding and support of such activities.

Workload, staffing, and pay issues are also critical to both the recruitment and retention of community college librarians. Community college librarians have been described as "overloaded, short-handed, and usually underpaid" (Poole, 2000, p. 486). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010) reports that salaries at two-year institutions lag behind those of four-year institutions. While some of this discrepancy is the result of the difference in terminal degree requirements between the two types of institutions, low salaries at community colleges remain a concern for potential librarians. The size of community college libraries is also a factor. Gardner (2006) reports that "the community college library is often small, with a small staff" (p. 22). Particularly at smaller institutions, the workload of community college librarians tends to be diverse, and involve all aspects of librarianship—reference, instruction, circulation, collection development, etc. There is very little specialization at the community college level (Holleman & Peretz, 1992).

At small colleges, there may be one or two professional librarians with a small staff to run the library. Issues related to staffing, including the appropriate use of paraprofessionals in reference and other areas, are thus more acute. Karp (2006) suggests finding the line between general questions that are appropriately answered by a paraprofessional and true reference questions that require a librarian is often a challenge. Faculty involvement in providing library instruction presents similar challenges. According to Karp (2006), "at some community colleges, the lack of an adequate number of librarians has resulted in discipline faculty teaching information literacy" (p. 268). While faculty involvement in teaching information literacy is welcome, the issue of faculty teaching specifically due to inadequate staffing is a problematic issue for community college libraries.

Status, Tenure, and Contracts
Employment status (i.e., faculty, staff, etc.), tenure, and contracts are another set of important workforce concerns for community college librarians. According to the Academic Librarian Status Wiki (n.d.), the status of librarians varies across community colleges. Librarians may be classified as faculty, non-teaching faculty, professional staff, or staff. The implication of this status is twofold; it both affects employment contracts and security, as well as librarians' relationships with teaching faculty. Palo and

Peterson (2006) report that some community college librarians are classified as faculty and follow the same tenure requirement.

In other cases, the system of tenure does not apply in the community college setting, but many two-year institutions offer a system of contracts that provide a similar system of employment security (Cohen, 2003). If librarians are classified as faculty, non-teaching faculty, or professional staff, they are often afforded the same contractual protections as teaching faculty. These contracts typically offer long-term protection against dismissal with the exception of gross misconduct (Mock, 1999). Employment status also bears some relevance to the perception of librarians and their work by college administration. Community college librarians often think that administrators are "inclined to regard librarians as marginal professionals in comparison to other faculty" (Poole, 2000, p. 489). This perception can have implications. Wahl (2007) reports that prior to his hiring, his campus of Front Range Community College had no librarian for three years.

Potential career paths and promotion or advancement is also an issue related to employment status, and again one that often differs for community college librarians. It is considered common in a four-year institution for librarians to move through a series of promotions based on an established set of criteria either driven by tenure requirements, or promotion requirements (service, creative activities) in the absence of tenure. These academic librarians, for example, might move from assistant university library to associate university librarian and beyond without changes in roles, positions, or levels of responsibility. The equivalent often does not exist in community college libraries, or even among community college faculty. In community colleges, promotion or advancement is typically tied to an increase in responsibilities, or moving into supervisory, managerial, or an administrative position. Succession planning is also not reflected in organizational structures. Dowell (2006) reports that "in all but the very largest college libraries, there are no formal manager-in-training positions such as assistant directors or assistant deans through which frontline librarians can make a systematic transition from professional to managerial activities" (p. xv). Librarians who do not move into these types of positions remain at the librarian rank or title.

Employment status factors into the development of the librarian-teaching faculty relationship. A 2000 survey of six community colleges in the City University of New York system found that "80 percent of the librarian respondents felt that their nonteaching status was inappropriate in light of the fact that they teach classes on the techniques of academic research and 84 percent felt that recognizing them as teaching faculty would help improve the status of the librarian in the academic community" (Feldman & Sciammarella, 2000, p. 492). Karp (2006) also reports the librarians' lack of teaching faculty status results in librarians not being seen on the

same level as faculty. This issue has another side, as well. The status of teaching faculty may also impact their usage of the community college library. A 2006 survey of faculty at LaGuardia Community College found that "tenured faculty [are] more likely to use the LaGuardia library than untenured faculty" (Ovadia, 2009, p. 339). The survey determined that faculty use library resources based on their comfort or familiarity with library resources, and that a faculty member's tenure status, based on his/her long-term employment with the college, resulted in a higher level of comfort than untenured faculty.

This raises a secondary, yet critical, issue related to community college libraries and their connection to faculty, classroom instruction, and library instruction. Johnston (1994) emphasizes that "all community colleges are institutions of higher education which emphasize teaching rather than research" (p. 55). Faculty may carry anywhere from fifteen to eighteen credit hours per semester, in addition to college service requirements (committee service), and student advising responsibilities. As a direct consequence of the heavy teaching load, community college faculty do not engage in their own research at the same level as college or university faculty and thus do not rely on the library and librarians to conduct their own research. Additionally, community college faculty in vocational areas may come directly from industry, and not have a background in higher education. The LaGuardia survey indicates that even when community college faculty does have publication requirements, this does not equate with substantial library usage. Community college libraries may not have adequate print or electronic resources to address faculty needs, or faculty may be relying on the research library of another institution, particularly if they are working on their own doctorate. The factors described above conspire to put distance between librarians and faculty at the two-year institution.

The substantial numbers of part-time faculty and staff are not insignificant issues in community colleges as a whole, and to their libraries. The use of part-time staff is another issue that distinguishes two-year institutions from their university counterparts. The majority of community college faculty is employed on a part-time basis. In the fall of 2003, the NCES reported that two-thirds of faculty (more than 240,000) held part-time appointments, while one-third was employed full time. Librarian-faculty relationships are made more difficult when faculty is employed part-time. Part-time faculty may not be on campus except to teach their classes, may not have a permanent office, and may not participate in the shared governance and committee work of the college (Shelton, 2009). Thus, opportunities to inform part-time faculty about library resources, librarians, and library instruction are often few and far between, and require extra effort on the part of the librarian to ensure success. Shelton notes the need for evening workshops to reach part-time faculty. Libraries may also

be staffed largely with part-time employees, which may lead to failures in continuity and consistency in staffing, policies, and procedures, as well as interaction with students and faculty.

Organizational Dynamics: Placement of the Library within the Institution
The place of the library in the organization of the larger institution similarly is not without consequence to a community college librarian's relationship with faculty. In the case of most four-year libraries, the library is a distinct unit within the college or university reporting through the chief academic officer or provost. In 1994, Johnston reported that "Learning Resources . . . nearly always is an individual division reporting directly to the Vice President of Instructional Services" (p. 25). Much has changed in the ensuring fifteen years. Community college libraries may be located within the instructional division of the college, but they might also be located within the academic support services division (a group that includes counselors, academic advisors, tutoring, etc.) or even the information technology division. Sinclair Community College Library, for example, reports through the college's senior vice president and chief information officer. The history of the Central Piedmont Community College Libraries also provides an example. The CPCC Libraries have been housed within the college's educational support services division, the information technology division, and the instruction unit, and in some cases, more than once.

Karp (2006) also reports that "disparate units" (tutoring, etc.) may be placed within the library (p. 266). The community college library's centrality to student learning and classroom instruction may be blurred if the library is in a division other than instruction, or if the mission extends beyond library services. This is particularly important in information literacy efforts that demand that teaching faculty view librarians as equal partners in instruction. Fradkin (2003) suggests concern at this pattern of expanding community college libraries beyond the traditional library services potentially leading to problems with patron satisfaction.

Practicing Community College Librarianship

Reference
The needs of community college students in terms of reference services have been described as "an important shade different from that of some other academic settings" (Katz, 1992, p. xi). Powers (2010) reports that "California community college reference librarians are faced with a number of demands on their time and services, both at the reference desk and away from it, which may differ from those of four-year college librarians" (p. 54). It is not uncommon for students to arrive at two-year colleges with little to no library experience, and thus a certain natural amount of library anxiety. Many students also lack a familiarity with technology

in general, and may not be comfortable with tasks ranging from using a mouse to logging into a computer to navigating through menus and around the Web. As a result, community college librarians "often must apply remediating measures before they can begin to address the immediate information need that brought the student into the library" (Powers, 2010, p. 55). Community college library reference services, then, tend to be a blend between the typical academic perspective (teach the student to find the information) and the traditional public library (provide the patron with the information).

Powers (2010) reports that this often leads to frustration on both the librarian and student sides of the reference interview—librarians want to teach, while students want to be given the answer. Community college librarians have to balance their responsibility to instruct students with the reality that many students are novice researchers and need more of a helping hand than might be considered typical in an academic library. The nature and type of reference questions also differs in the community college library. Truly in-depth research questions tend to be few and far between, while technology related questions (word processing, printing, email) are far more common. Powers' study reveals that community college librarians often feel this results in "frustrated, fractured, and fragmented service" (p. 59). Further, "the librarians seem to feel that they have become all things to all people to the detriment of their true responsibilities" (Powers, p. 59).

Reference services in community colleges also focus on providing access to reference sources and services at the point of student need, in ways that address the demands community college students have on their time. Unlike at undergraduate institutions with residential students, many community college students have family and work obligations, which may mean that they do not spend much time on campus outside of actual class meeting times. As a result, libraries focus on providing online reference services via chat and email, and creating tutorials that provide assistance to students at any time of the day or night. The concept of "roving reference," of approaching patrons rather than waiting for them to approach the reference desk is applicable in the community college setting. Reference interview skills are of significant importance in the community college library. Librarians must be able to draw out of novice researchers their true needs (Powers, 2010).

Instruction
Library instruction in community colleges requires tailoring to meet the unique and diverse needs of community college students. The same issues with student experience and familiarity with technology relevant to reference services apply to library instruction. Small, Zakari, and El-Figuigui (2004) indicate that there are community college libraries that

also teach basic computer literacy as a part of their instruction programs. Some students, though, will be technologically savvy, and the challenge is to teach to both groups of students without losing one or the other. Community college librarians are also highly likely to be involved in designing instruction sessions for students in developmental reading and English courses. Roselle's (2008) survey of community college librarians found that 100 percent of respondents were involved in teaching basic library skills to developmental students. Teaching developmental students places a different set of demands on the librarian, who must find ways to adjust the typical library instruction class to suit the needs of the students. The nature of many community college programs also poses challenges for any instruction program. Programs in vocational areas or applied technologies (welding, HVAC, construction) are not traditionally library or research intensive programs. Faculty and students in these curriculum areas may not see any need or use for the library or its materials. In order to engage the faculty and students, community college librarians have to be persistent in their outreach, and also ensure that the outreach is crafted to show the relevancy of the library to what the students are learning in the classroom. Fry's (2009) study of the information-seeking behavior of community college students indicates that the "motivational aspects of community college students are more varied and complex than other students" (p.43).

Though instruction in the community college library is challenging, opportunities for providing information literacy instruction are growing, and growing in importance. According to Breivik and Gee (2006), community college information literacy efforts began in the early and mid-1990s. In 1993, a report entitled "Information Competency: An Initiative for Integrated Learning" (Library/Media Directors Council) was accepted by the Instruction Commission of the Washington Association of Community and Technical Colleges. This report stated that "the establishment of Information Competency as an instructional priority means a commitment to educating the full person for today's world, and fulfills the community and technical college mission of comprehensive education for life-long learning." A recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* Wired blog post entitled "Information Literacy Classes Surge at Community Colleges" cites a recent survey by Primary Research Group Inc. indicating a rapidly growing demand for information literacy courses, "the average percentage increase in the number of these classes offered from the fall semester of 2006 to the fall semester of 2007 was 38.1%" (§ 1). The survey also found that 5 percent of colleges require an information literacy course in order to graduate. In May 2008, the American Association of Community Colleges (n.d.) published their position statement on information literacy, encouraging faculty and librarians to collaborate: "Classroom faculty should partner with library and learning resource center staff to form

instructional teams to encourage information literacy outcomes in credit and noncredit instruction." Information literacy is included in the general education goals of a number of community colleges, including the Virginia Community College System, the New Jersey Community College System, Community College of Allegheny County, LaGuardia Community College, and Surry Community College. Schools with information literacy courses and/or graduation requirements include: Minneapolis Technical and Community College, St. Petersburg College, and the Maricopa System.

Distance Learning

As with all segments of higher education, distance or e-learning is a growing phenomenon on the community college campus. In the community college setting, distance learning is not the most accurate term, as most students are not at a distance, but rather have work and family obligations that make online learning far more convenient than the traditional face-to-face classroom. Community college libraries are charged with finding sufficient ways to support students taking courses online. The American Association of Community Colleges (2005) addresses this reality in its position statement on distance learning:

> Just as distance learner classroom assignments should duplicate on-campus assignments in their intent and learning objectives, library resources and services should duplicate on-campus access to resources and services to ensure equality. Information literacy experiences should also duplicate those experiences in on-campus programs and students should have access to and contact with a information professional to ensure they think critically about the research process and information and access, select, evaluate and use resources and design services and activities appropriate to the curriculum. . . . Colleges should provide access to organized online library resources and a service plan for distance learners and remote users. Both workforce and credit higher education curriculum are now inextricably tied to the equitable online access of materials that support not only the curriculum content and delivery, but also the accreditation standards and guidelines required of many programs today.

Collection Development

As with reference and instruction, collection development for a community college presents a unique set of challenges. First and foremost, access to up-to-date information, rather than preservation, is the foremost concern for community college libraries. Many college programs, notably nursing and other allied health programs, have accreditation standards that require that library resources be no more than five years old. This makes consistent and regular deselection an imperative (though, like with four-year institutions, it is still not without controversy). Moreover, selection of materials suitable for community college students and programs

can be difficult. For some program areas, locating both print and electronic materials that address the topics covered in the curriculum is not easy, largely because there simply is not a substantial amount of material published in those subject areas. Finding what has been published is also difficult, as many selection aids available to librarians do not address vocational areas. The challenge with locating general education materials for classes like English, history, or sociology is finding the materials that are scholarly, but are still appropriate for the first two years of college. Steps are being taken by vendors to assist community college librarians with collection development. For example, Bowker's *Resources for College Libraries* introduced a collection of career and vocational resources.

Raley and Smith (2006) report that finding appropriate databases for community college students and programs can also be a challenge, and some vendors are beginning to acknowledge that community colleges represent a segment of the market with particular needs and one that has been overlooked. More databases that address the needs of vocational programs are available than ever before. Pricing models for database and electronic resources also presents issues for libraries. Those based on student enrollment or FTE, the standard for four-year institutions, often put products out of the price range of many community college library budgets. In the past ten years, more vendors have addressed the concerns of community college libraries and distinct pricing models for community colleges have begun to appear in the market (Raley & Smith).

In addition, while marketing the library's collection is critical to the success of any library, it is even more critical to the community college library. With their obligations outside of their education, students may be largely unaware of the wide variety of services and resources available to them through their library. For Thomson and Schott (2007) the diversity of community college students "means that the tasks of creating awareness of e-resources and increasing their usage are not straightforward efforts" (p. 58). Marketing thus has to be a focus of not only collection development, but also reference and instruction.

Conclusion

Community colleges face a conundrum. These important employment concerns and workplace issues reveal that community colleges should be recognized as a unique segment of higher education, and community college libraries should be considered on their own, rather than simply as a part of the university or college academic library field. This distinction, however, has not yet been thoroughly reflected in the literature. More research is needed on large-scale employment issues, such as tenure and contracts, and their relationship to the long-term career development of community college librarians. Specifically, research on the impact of faculty status on community college librarians, particularly research that

examines professional development (requirements, funding, etc.), would help to clarify the role employment status plays in the careers of community college librarians. Additional research on the education, training, and recruitment of new community college librarians would also be welcome, including surveying library school students to gauge their awareness of and potential interest in community college librarianship as a potential career path. Bird and Crumpton's (2010) recently launched *The 21st Century Community College Librarian* research project, surveying the education and job requirements of community college librarians, is a step in the right direction (N. Bird & M. Crumpton, personal communication, May 6, 2010).

Community college library collections represent another unexplored area in library literature. Though every college is distinguished by its need to serve its own local community, more analysis of the size, depth, and age of community college collections would be helpful to each college as attempts to build curriculum-responsive collections that meet a variety of accrediting agency standards. The study conducted by Perrault, Adams, Smith, and Dixson (2002) provides a model for this type of research. Additional analyses of the usage of databases, e-books, and other electronic resources by both community college students and faculty are warranted, as well. In fact, more research into how community college faculty views the information-seeking behavior and library skills of their own students would be invaluable to librarians. In general, the literature should distinguish community college libraries, librarians, and patrons from their academic library counterparts at four-year institutions, rather than treating them as a subset of those four-year institutions.

Fry (2009), Poole and Denny (2001), C. Bell (2004), and Carr (2006) each express concern over the limited availability of research specific to community colleges. Johnson (2009) reports that "the *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science* discusses 'Academic, Special Libraries in Romania, but not community college libraries in the United States" (p. 127). Carr (2006) calls for community college librarians to become more visible through association work, while Poole (2000) calls for community college librarians to research and publish. More research and publications by community college librarians seems necessary for greater recognition of the practice of community college librarianship as distinct from other types of academic librarianship. Community colleges libraries combine elements of academic libraries, public libraries, and special libraries. Katz's (1992) phrase "an important shade different from that of some other academic settings" is a telling, and accurate, description of the community college library.

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