Isn’t Being a Librarian Enough?
Librarians As Classroom Teachers

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ABSTRACT. The issue of college and university librarians teaching credit-bearing courses is studied by describing its historical background and providing an overview of the literature. The debate is framed by summarizing the fundamental issue: the degree to which academic librarians benefit when they assume classroom-teaching roles. The roles of academic librarians as teachers and faculty are analyzed in the context of classroom teaching. While academic libraries and their librarians do benefit from expanded teaching roles, there are some qualifying factors. doi:10.1300/J106v13n03_02

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PREFACE

Sophocles, Dante, and W. E. B. DuBois became close companions during 2004, while the author was teaching in the college’s first-year interdisciplinary History-English course. Learning to teach a class which met three times a week for an entire year with a syllabus of largely unfamiliar material was an enormous challenge. It was daunting to prepare to teach the significant texts, including texts from non-European traditions, and to supplement the material as well as integrate writing instruction into the syllabus. Pedagogical techniques needed to be studied and implemented. Writing assignments ranging from informal reading responses to formal essays required extra training for effective assessment. Grading, which had never been necessary even after many years of teaching bibliographic instruction, was a journey into unknown territory. Meeting frequently outside of class with students who needed motivation somewhere on the scale between encouragement and chastisement entailed large blocks of time and fortitude. The inevitable conclusion was that “teaching is a black hole for time,” as stated by a fellow librarian turned classroom teacher. Her assessment that “it will suck as many hours as you can give it every week, and even take some you can’t give” was right on target (Blakeslee 1998, 76).

INTRODUCTION

While admittedly this synopsis may be interpreted as a largely negative case study focusing on the issue of librarians teaching in the classroom, the result of the experience is that the author is committed to continue teaching in the program for several more years. The year proved to be so overwhelmingly positive for both the author and the library that the other full-time librarians at the college have either joined the course team or started offering their own courses, although this occurred after many months of struggling over the advisability of undertaking this unfamiliar assignment. The reservations once felt by the librarians about this changing role have been replaced by the conviction that this is an opportune time to launch a new way of teaching.

From a review of the literature, anecdotal evidence, and personal experience, the prediction of one library school educator seems to be that the academic library culture is moving from a bibliographic culture to a teaching culture (Elmborg and Lawler 2002, 12). A recent study demonstrated that of the academic librarians who responded to a survey
about librarians teaching in the classroom, about half had taught a class in an academic discipline (Partello 2005, 112). Still, the fact that a librarian faculty member was teaching a course section is not the norm. However, since the data suggests that more academic librarians are teaching credit-bearing discipline classes than might have been thought to be, the issue appears ripe for additional study and analysis.

Isn’t being a librarian enough? A few preliminary remarks are in order before this question is fully explored. It should be stated up front that the growing classroom-teaching role of academic librarians has resulted in both anticipated and unanticipated benefits, not only for the librarians, but also for members of the campus community and the library. These benefits, when weighed against the liabilities of classroom teaching, argue that librarians should teach credit-bearing courses when possible. While the liabilities may seem forceful, backed by tradition and established practice, they should be factored into the decision rather than constrain the final conclusion.

Benefits for the librarians include closer interaction with students over an extended period of time, a deeper understanding of faculty workloads, student needs, and administrative requirements, new ways of looking at collection development, enhancement of faculty status, increased intellectual stimulation, and sharper self-assessment of performance. A natural byproduct emanating from these benefits for the librarians is an energized and revitalized role for the library on campus. A thorough review of the issue will substantiate these assertions.

**CONTEXT**

Fifty years ago, at a conference of college librarians, one of the presenters answered this question by stating, “Of course, there are many instances in which librarians do actually serve as members of the faculty and do meet certain classes within the curriculum, but then they are not acting as librarians, they are acting as teachers” (Shera 1955, 7). The speaker further argued that it was a “silly pretense” to play teacher, suggesting that academic librarians need to simply be librarians and “cease trying to be what we are not and should not want to be” (13). Librarians should develop the scholarship of their own profession and discover that librarianship is “just as rewarding, just as academically respectable, and far more intellectually satisfying, not to say stimulating, than teaching six sections of freshman composition” (13).
Twenty-five years later, two librarians, one of whom had taught in a similar two-semester core course for freshmen, issued a report supporting Shera’s viewpoint. The authors estimated that the librarian-teacher devoted at least fifteen hours per week to the new teaching role, factoring in class time, staff meetings, grading, preparation, and diagnostic work on writing assignments (Borchuck and Bergup 1976, 7). While admitting there were some advantages to the librarian assuming a teaching role, they emphasized the negative professional side effects of this role change (9-10). These included the worry that the librarian-teacher unwittingly reinforced the stereotype of the other non-teaching librarians as administrators who are not intellectually credible. They also noted that relatively little in library skills could be built into the classroom assignments, and they questioned whether the status of the librarian improved through such teaching roles (10-11). Worries about the professional recognition of librarianship culminated in their observation that the “status-successful college librarian may now be in a movement of de-professionalization as a librarian, and re-professionalization as a part-time teacher” (13).

At about the same time, a librarian put forward just the opposite view in an opinion piece printed in *Academe*. The writer suggested that some academic librarians might wish to teach rather than gravitate toward administrative functions in their positions. He pointed out that small colleges, especially those with limited course offerings and strained budgets, could take advantage of their academic competency. Librarians could be spokespersons for the faculty concerning the library and could develop a heightened awareness of the materials needed to support the curriculum. He concluded that librarians too often have been agents of reaction instead of initiators of actions such as classroom teaching (Yerburgh 1979, 442).

More recently, a library director suggested additional benefits for librarians teaching in the classroom. He explained that by taking on this additional responsibility, the librarian could learn to see students from a new angle, leading to greater empathy with them. Further, the librarian could better understand faculty’s library concerns and become more intimately acquainted with faculty, especially in the department in which they teach. He added that being in the classroom means having a more thorough knowledge of curricular concerns and that collegiality is enhanced when the librarians are seen as team players involved in all aspects of the academic life. Finally, he contended that teaching brings faculty recognition of the librarian as a “true faculty member.” Faculty status would be *de facto* rather than *de jure* (Hall 1990, 103-107).
THE DEBATE

These conflicting views, which have endured over a fifty-year period, point to the fundamental issues in the debate about whether it is advisable for the academic librarian to also be a classroom teacher. While one argues that being a librarian is a professional role, which does not need to be dignified by adding teaching responsibilities and that classroom teaching actually detracts from primary library responsibilities, the other contends that when librarians teach credit-bearing classes, both they and their institution benefit.

Complicating the debate is the fact that academic librarians traditionally have already regarded themselves as teachers, functioning as the mediator between information and patron, providing one-to-one teaching at the reference desk and in-service training for peers and support staff (Rapple 1997, 114). Many academic institutions also offer for-credit library instruction and research methods or computer skill courses that librarians teach. Librarians are becoming more active in curriculum design, in team teaching and in devising and evaluating assignments (115). Most frequently, librarians have taught single class library or bibliographic instruction to individuals and groups. Initiatives in information literacy, the successor to library instruction, have been implemented recently in many academic libraries as changing technology has expanded the information choices available. Standards for information literacy have been endorsed by both professional library and higher education organizations during the last few years, articulating expectations and performance indicators for students (Association of College and Research Libraries Standards 2002, 1-4). Thus, teaching is hardly a foreign matter for academic librarians.

An additional factor to be considered is the issue of faculty status for academic librarians. In order to teach credit-bearing classes, the librarian needs to have some form of full or partial faculty status. Either way, academic librarians are keenly aware of the responsibilities and obligations associated with this status. Evaluation of college faculty performance typically focuses principally on effective teaching, although standards of scholarship and service must also be met for retention, tenure, and promotion (Gamble 1989, 346). However, proving the effectiveness of teaching without a classroom-teaching assignment becomes more problematic when librarians are evaluated comparably with other teaching faculty. It should be noted here that evaluation of university faculty performance is likely to focus principally on scholarship, an issue addressed later in this paper.
The question posed by the title of this paper can best be answered after the teaching and faculty roles of academic librarians, summarized above, are further analyzed.

LIBRARIANS AS TEACHERS

The model of the scholar/professor/librarian is not unusual, as colleges and universities developed in the nineteenth century when faculties were small and departments less structured. While the stereotype of an academic librarian as “bibliophile, as book-worm, as authority on watermarks, typography, and the history of the papyrus scroll” has validity, it is also likely that these librarians were involved in classroom teaching to a degree (Shera 1955, 8). Historically, librarians have been members of other professions who assumed the additional duties of library work at their institutions. Many of these early librarians were also professors who taught in their specialty areas on a regular basis (Lorenzen 2001, 8-9). These library lecturers, however, typically did not teach classes dedicated to library use, although some began to teach courses on bibliography as early as the end of the nineteenth century (Salony 1995, 33).

Academic library instruction began to emerge as a systematic educational enterprise in the 1960s and 1970s when it enjoyed what one author called a “revival” and “expansion” (Salony 1995, 40-42). Conferences were held on the topic, and print materials such as library guides and bibliographies were shared. Library and education literature reflected this heightened interest with innumerable articles devoted to the subject (Lorenzen 2001, 10-11). Recognition for library instruction also became visible to the profession during the 1970s through the establishment of new subdivisions within established library organizations such as ALA’s Library Instruction Round Table and the Bibliographic Instruction Section in the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (Schiller 1981, 5).

Concerns About Teaching

Despite the growing commitment of librarians to teach through library instruction, the practice of librarians as classroom teachers has remained somewhat controversial. A top administrator at one university presented the convincing argument that librarians are isolated from the “mainstream of teaching/learning processes occurring in an institution’s classrooms
and laboratories” (Leonard 1989, 28). He suggested that, despite the abundance of ongoing instructional work offered by librarians, the domain of classroom teaching belongs to the teaching faculty. Long-standing academic tradition discourages anyone but the instructor from access to the classroom (28). Another author agreed, pointing out that college and university librarians see themselves as separate education agencies, which operate independently from the rest of the campus, making it difficult for them to fully understand how they are components of the educational system (Wilson 1979, 152).

Other writers underscore these points by noting that librarians simply do not fit well as classroom teachers. Designing a course, grading, and having office hours is outside their discipline and not what people expect librarians to do (Douglas 1999, 28). There is no basis in fact that causes a connection between the occupational roles of academic librarians and faculty members (Wilson 1979, 154). Although an integral part of the college or university community, librarians remain academic outsiders, even if they hold faculty status (Hauptman and Hill 1990, 93). Another academic librarian summed it up by stating that because librarians are a “minority model” for faculty, they feel the need to “dress themselves in the clothing of another profession— that of teaching,” but that in the long run the “masquerade” will not be successful (Hill 1994, 75).

The terminal degree earned by librarians, which determines the content of courses academic librarians might teach, paradoxically both limits and expands their potential as classroom teachers. The profession of librarianship has great diversity with members coming from all discipline backgrounds (McFadden 2005, 533). While this diversity means many librarians have subject specialties which might broaden the curriculum in some way, it also means that librarians who are generalists equipped only with the MLS degree will be limited in what they could be expected to teach. Courses readily available to them might be limited to first-year core discussion groups, honors sections, freshman orientation classes, or team-taught interdisciplinary programs. If the great scholar-librarians of the past are anachronisms, as alleged by one writer, then it will be difficult to find teaching opportunities in the majors of our colleges and universities (Hauptman and Hill 1990, 94). However, when librarians elect to earn the terminal degree in particular subject areas which are recognized at their institutions, there is potential for new teaching opportunities to unfold.

The inflexibility of the academic librarian’s daily schedule also is cited as a reason for librarians not easily taking on classroom-teaching roles. One view is that because the library’s function is to serve the rest
of the campus whenever service is needed, most academic librarians must work a “relatively inflexible daily schedule” (Hill 1994, 74). This schedule does not conform neatly to the academic year and actually must be carried on year round. The argument continues that since the major purpose of academic librarians is to support the academic efforts of students in their learning and faculty in their teaching, non-teaching faculty feel they are unable to absorb additional responsibilities into their already crowded workday (Johnson 1997, 8).

The absence of opportunities to learn teaching methodologies in library schools is also a concern for librarians contemplating the classroom-teaching role. Although library education traditionally does not include such courses, it should be remembered that neither do most other graduate disciplines (Elmborg and Lawler 2002, 12). Graduate students learn excellent teaching practices from the experience they gain through teaching assistantships and by working with seasoned veteran teachers (Mitchell and Morton 1992, 382). However, library education curricula now typically provide at least some coverage of instructional methodologies. An example is a collaborative program, launched in 2001 by the University of Iowa Libraries and School of Library and Information Science, which addresses this need by offering some graduate students a “student teaching-like experience” while earning a salary as graduate assistants. The students receive experience in curriculum development, classroom teaching, and interact on a professional level with practicing librarians who are offering instruction. The program has received high praise from students, library school faculty, and librarians, since the numerous benefits “far outweigh the challenges,” according to the program coordinator (Forys 2004, 67-68). While academic librarians beginning their careers may benefit from such curricular innovations, veteran librarians will still need to be proactive about seeking out the abundant professional development opportunities available such as reading the literature devoted to teaching and learning and attending workshops and continuing education seminars.

Another caution about librarians becoming classroom teachers is that the role of the non-teaching librarian may become more vulnerable if only some librarians elect to teach credit-bearing courses. Could the attitude be reinforced that those librarians who do not teach in the classroom do more administrative and clerical tasks than their teaching colleagues? Moreover, might it follow that the stereotype of the non-teaching librarian is thus deemed “less important and even dispensable?” Borchuck and Bergrup assert that this issue brings into high relief the intellectual credibility of all the librarians at the institution, thus recommending that the
issue should be taken into account when decisions are made about teaching appointments (10).

Thus, the concept of academic librarians as classroom teachers has been criticized frequently during the past couple of decades for a variety of reasons (Lorenzen 2001, 15). However, support for classroom teaching has also been growing, as evidenced by recent publications on the subject.

**Support for Teaching**

In articles published in 2005, several academic librarians who have most recently taught credit-bearing courses recount their experiences and strongly advocate the concept. The principal advantage articulated is the opportunity to work with students beyond the standard one-time interaction provided by conventional library instruction. One author argues that becoming more deeply involved with students provides a chance for librarians to interact outside of the classroom setting (McFadden 2005, 534). As a result of developing deeper relationships with a librarian, students will be more comfortable about visiting the library and seeking reference assistance. They also will learn to use the library since library instruction was more often embedded in the courses through assignments (Partello 2005, 109).

Another argument in favor of librarians teaching in the classroom is that their knowledge of subject specialties broadens academic curricular offerings. As stated previously, individuals who train for academic librarian careers typically represent a variety of subject interests and research backgrounds (McFadden 2005, 534). These can be put to excellent use in the classroom especially when teaching first-year seminars or information literacy courses, team teaching in various majors, or being in leadership positions on campus to reshape the curriculum (Auer and Krupar 2005, 39).

Several of these authors also assert that faculty status for academic librarians, a topic addressed with more detail in the next section of this paper, is validated when they teach credit-bearing classes. Networking with faculty by discussing syllabi, assignments, classroom problems, and student issues provides additional bonds with fellow teachers while at the same time educating the faculty about perspectives librarians can bring to the classroom (Auer and Krupar 2005, 52). The importance of such networking is also highlighted by other authors who cite the necessity of coordination and collaboration with faculty as additional worthy goals to achieve the same purpose (Kraat 2005, 2). The growth of mutual
respect and appreciation felt by the faculty for the librarians teaching in the classroom setting is also a benefit (Partello 2005, 108).

Grading issues also play a prominent role when librarians teach in a classroom setting. Auer and Krupar make the important point that they expect grading to be more significant for academic librarians as library instruction “evolves into longer and more meaningful experiences with teaching faculty and students” (2005, 55). Since library instruction is traditionally limited to short encounters with students, grading usually has not been included as part of the librarian’s responsibility with the class. These authors argue that, while learning to grade requires time and energy, to do well and “increase confidence and comfort” for the librarian assessing the knowledge of the students is becoming an increasingly necessary skill (Auer and Krupar 2005, 41).

Learning additional pedagogical theory and practice is also an asset for librarians who teach beyond the typical content offered at the library instruction level. Such librarians are more readily included in campus workshops about teaching and learning and becoming acquainted with classroom management systems and other technologies available for instructors (Partello 2005, 109). Help with technology is freely accessible in educational institutions, especially from peers within the library who are especially knowledgeable about computer applications. Beyond technology, they also learn about best practices from colleagues eager to share their experience and expertise. There is no lack of assistance and support for enhancing classroom-teaching competencies.

The matter of compensation must also be mentioned. When local conditions permit, librarians may receive extra compensation for classroom teaching, especially if the teaching is done during the summer months (McFadden 2005, 534). Load reduction is another form of compensation, when built into the regular contract. This may have special appeal for some librarians who need flexibility or look forward to a change in responsibilities.

**LIBRARIANS AS FACULTY**

The concept of whether academic librarians ought to be faculty has generated a voluminous quantity of articles, essays, and reports in the library and educational literature. However, one author observed that fewer articles have been published on the topic during the 1990s than in the previous decades of the 1970s and 1980s. He reasoned that academic librarians who have academic status, rather than having second thoughts about
achieving or maintaining it, actually now believe more firmly in the practice (Riggs 1999, 305).

Before discussing the merits of librarians as faculty, however, a summary of the most current survey of trends for faculty status, rank, and tenure is in order to establish a benchmark for the topic. In 1999, ACRL survey staff discovered that “most academic librarians are provided some conditions of faculty status at their institutions, either fully or partially” (Cary 2001, 510). Since there is no uniform definition of what constitutes faculty status, the survey asked respondents to reply to which of the nine conditions listed in the ACRL Guidelines for Faculty Status (formally approved by ACRL and ALA in 2001) were offered by their institution (Association of College and Research Libraries Standards 2001, 510-511). It also must be understood that “faculty status” (e.g., having the same privileges and responsibilities as other faculty) is not the same as “academic status” where librarians are not granted the same rank, benefits, and responsibilities as faculty (Hoggan 2003, 432).

Librarians who responded to the survey indicated that they are “gaining equality” with teaching faculty in the areas of research funding, leaves of absence (87%), and professional development opportunities (71.4%), but that they are “not on an equal footing” with salary, benefits, and appointment period (43.3%). Tenure and peer review were also problematic areas since 35% of librarians responded they were not covered by the same tenure policies or promoted consistently with the same standards as other faculty. The Director of Research and Special Initiatives at ACRL concluded that salary issues are the most “prominent area in which librarians and faculty are not being treated equally” (Cary 2001, 511). Thus, the survey revealed that even though academic librarians who have faculty status feel they are gaining equity with their teaching peers, there are some areas in which they do not feel they are treated equally.

Rather than thoroughly explore the advantages and disadvantages of the faculty status case here, it is important instead to focus our discussions on how it relates to librarians teaching in the classroom. There are several compelling considerations to analyze.

**Advantages and Disadvantages of Faculty Status**

The privileges which accompany faculty status are well-known. These privileges include the protection of academic freedom, a right dearly held by academic librarians who are especially sensitive to providing access to information and disputing censorship challenges (Murray-Rust 2005, B10). Access to research and development funds as
well as faculty benefits such as sabbatical and research leaves are standard benefits of academe. Rank, tenure, and promotion are important ways in which faculty are simultaneously protected and advanced in their careers. Receiving equitable compensation, including salaries and fringe benefits, is a way in which librarians can achieve equality with teaching faculty. Membership in college and university governance guarantees representation on all governing bodies at the institution (ACRL Standards 2001).

There is a lack of consensus among academic librarians regarding the benefits and value of faculty status for academic librarians (Mitchell and Morton 1992, 379). While the benefits of faculty status for the effectiveness of academic librarians are recognized as crucial by the premier professional academic library organization, the obligations that accompany the benefits are not universally desired by all librarians in colleges and universities. In fact, some academic librarians might be discouraged from accepting certain positions when they factor in the pressure associated with attempting to obtain tenure. The same librarians might also worry that they would pay less attention to the core responsibilities of librarianship, if they accept a faculty librarian position (Carver 2005, B11).

Academic librarians with faculty status must be evaluated based on their academic proficiency and professional effectiveness consistent with campus standards (Association of College and Research Libraries Standards 2001). When this is done, some librarians may fear that meeting these standards “depends on disguising ‘librarianship’ as teaching” or even using the terminology of teaching to promote those activities that are most easily equated with teaching. One academic librarian, responding to this apprehension, suggested this can be accomplished by describing librarianship and the accomplishments of individual librarians in terms teaching faculty can “understand, that draw appropriate parallels, and that treat differences clearly but without apology” (Hill 1994, 71).

Other aspects of evaluation for academic librarians also must be addressed. While reference, technical services, and collection development still define the profession, classroom teaching for librarians can add a beneficial dimension (Douglas 1999, 28). One benefit, mentioned above, is that when librarians with faculty status are evaluated according to the institutional standards of teaching, scholarship, and service, they are being evaluated by the same criteria which apply to all faculty. In a recent article which looked at the evolution of librarians’ jobs and whether they should “get tenure,” the point was made that librarians
who have been evaluated through the same process as other faculty members are in a better position to “enhance the quality of research, teaching and service in academe” (Murray-Rust 2005, B10). In addition, it is more straightforward to evaluate the teaching component for librarians when they engage in classroom teaching since standard teaching evaluation forms, used throughout the institution, would measure their effectiveness in the pool alongside their classroom-teaching peers. A potential negative factor to also consider, however, is that teaching outside the library might not compare favorably with other professional activity when academic librarians are evaluated (Partello 2005, 109).

Should librarians use teaching to justify their status as faculty? In a recent article, this point was made when the author, who had taught a credit-bearing course, asserted that the faculty status of librarians is further validated for the institution’s faculty and administration when the librarian assumes a classroom-teaching assignment (McFadden 2005, 534). She regarded this as a strong benefit of classroom teaching, out-ranking several of the other advantages listed in the article. A library director promoting classroom teaching for librarians made the same point, stating that faculty status is synonymous with teaching and that to be a real faculty member, a librarian should “teach for status” (Hall 1990, 100, 104). In another recent article, library directors were surveyed for their opinions about academic librarians teaching courses. “Recognition as peer by teaching faculty” ranked second in summarizing why directors supported teaching although one director stated that recognition as a peer won’t necessarily come from teaching faculty since they are still an elite club (Partello 2005, 113-14). This same point was echoed by another author who stated that it is “simplistic” for librarians to believe that faculty status earns automatic collegial respect when it is obvious that individual librarians must “earn” that respect (White 1996, 39). One academic librarian who made a comprehensive study of the literature on the topic concluded that the “majority of published opinion” supports the idea that faculty status “improves the stature and image of academic librarians” (Hoggan 2003, 433).

Another author contended that few faculty and administrators outside the library are convinced by this “organizational fiction” and that actually it is counter-productive for the librarian (Wilson 1979, 146). She reasoned that academic librarians who claim to be teachers not only wish to bolster their justification for faculty status, but also have a genuine need to redefine themselves with a “more comforting” and readily understandable self-image (149, 151). She also noted that, while librarians do some teaching when they provide library instruction, such teaching is
only a small part of the behaviors that define the librarian role. Wilson concluded that academic librarians who claim to be teachers can experience discomfort and uncertainty about their position (155-156, 158). A veteran library leader agreed that, while academic librarians serve a significant role in the “academic side of the campus administration,” they have a mission different from that of the faculty. Moreover, he was especially critical of those who argue that instruction librarians should be considered as teaching faculty (Leonard 2004, 3). A library director concurred with this argument, maintaining that academic librarians who aspire to faculty status should realize that having managerial skills is more important than being a “classroom maestro” (Rux 1988, 32).

The value of faculty status for librarians was questioned by another author who argued that research institutions, in particular, will not value teaching as highly as research. In those institutions, tenure and promotion decisions are based on scholarship as the primary measure when reviewed against the other evaluation standards of teaching and service (Hoggan 2003, 437). Thus, librarians teaching in the classroom actually will not be enhancing their status within the institution (White 1996, 40). An editor of an academic library journal affirmed this view stating that “excellent teaching may be suspect” at major research universities since these teachers are likely devoting more time to teaching than research (Riggs 1999, 305).

Other problems relating to faculty status also exist. Typically classroom faculty are awarded 9- or 10-month contracts while librarians, even those with faculty status, usually have 12-month contracts (Riggs 1999, 306). Librarians teaching credit-bearing classes require additional time for preparation and scholarship. Thus, a load challenge arises (Douglas 1999, 28). When surveyed, several library directors commented that librarians might have a hard time fulfilling all their library duties if they teach courses. They worried about teaching librarians experiencing excessive stress and did not want other librarians to have to pick up the slack (Partello 2005, 113). Another director said plainly, “I do not support them doing so on library time since they would be paid to teach a course in another discipline” (114). Personal time also may be an issue for academic librarians with faculty status since the competing demands for teaching, research, writing, conferences, and service can not only cause extra stress, but divert time spent on librarianship (Hoggan 2003, 438).

Terminal degrees present another significant concern. As stated earlier in this essay, the terminal degree for librarians remains the MLS (or one of the several variants of this degree) from an ALA-accredited
institution, not the doctorate (Hoggan 2003, 432). While some colleges and universities accept this terminal degree for librarians with faculty status, others require a second master’s degree or a doctorate (Douglas 1999, 28). The unambiguous statement that academic librarians as a group are not as well-educated as the faculty as a group simplifies the concern (Wilson 1979, 153). One author plainly stated that the additional degree helps considerably for those librarians wishing to become faculty members at their institutions (Hall 1990, 102). There also may be resentment from the faculty when academic librarians without the doctorate aspire to faculty status, especially when both groups are competing for the same resources (Hoggan 2003, 436). Since there is often a discrepancy between the terminal degree required for academic librarians and teaching faculty members, expectations for the librarians engaged in classroom teaching would need to be clearly articulated.

The fit of librarians and faculty in the academic setting should be mentioned. One author concluded that librarians and classroom faculty have similar personality preferences as measured by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator test, a personality inventory for exploring human behavior. The test identifies preferences rather than competencies. The similarities in preferences between academic librarians and faculty stand in “stark contrast” to those of the general population. She noted that this makes academic librarians natural colleagues for faculty and provides a strong basis for their collaboration (Scherdin 2002, 237-40). While stopping short of suggesting that academic librarians could be superior classroom teachers on their own, she confines her conclusions to arguing how librarians would be productive partners with faculty in enterprises such as providing supporting materials for classes, grant writing or team teaching a class (249). She also deduces that academic librarians typically possess the preferences to provide exceptional scholarship and service, the other standard categories in which faculty are evaluated (248).

Finally, attention must be drawn to the views of the primary professional organization for academic librarians, the Association of College and Research Libraries, as well those of the Association of American Colleges and the American Association of University Professors. These organizations all endorse the concept of faculty status for academic librarians. In a Joint Statement on Faculty Status of College and University Librarians initially drafted in 1972, these organizations state clearly, “The function of the librarian as participant in the processes of teaching and research is the essential criterion of faculty status.” They further proclaim, “Librarians perform a teaching and research role inasmuch as they instruct students formally and informally and advise and assist fac-

**ISN’T BEING A LIBRARIAN ENOUGH?**

Sorting out answers to this question, based on the analysis presented here, demonstrates that being an academic librarian is enough responsibility for many professionals. However, it has been observed by more than one author that academic librarians must redefine who they are in order to prosper in the academe of the future (Murray-Rust 2005, B10). The point was emphasized by the observation that they are “not exactly teaching professors nor simply white collar clerks” and are even being “marginalized into a specialized academic ghetto” (Johnson 1997, 9). It is clear that adding classroom teaching to the responsibilities of those librarians who choose the option results in a significant benefit. At the same time, this analysis indicates that the possible disadvantages for librarians must be taken into account when they assume teaching responsibilities. In the end, those academic librarians who can and wish to teach credit-bearing courses should be encouraged to do so.

While the liabilities and benefits for academic librarians engaging in classroom teaching have been summarized throughout this paper, a distillation of the most outstanding advantages is in order here to emphasize that being a librarian AND a classroom teacher is the most desirable combination.

- Learning to interact with students on an extended basis is the number one reason for academic librarians to teach in the classroom (McFadden 2005, 534; Douglas 1999, 28). The limited opportunities that most librarians have to interact with students provide a very different perspective from that gained through regular, sustained contact. One teacher-librarian observed that she saw first-hand the “cognitive, technological, emotional and physical roadblocks” that students may encounter when starting to perform research (Donnelly 2000, 47). She reflected that after teaching, librarians could better understand the students’ various developmental stages (48). Students also see the librarian in a new light as a greatly expanded resource person, allowing them a view into the world of librarianship they might never see otherwise (Borchuck and Bergup 1977, 9). In addition, students do incorporate what they have learned
from a librarian-led class when their future assignments require learning about research resources and tools (Auer and Krupar 2005, 54).

- Walking in the shoes of the teaching faculty certainly increases sensitivity to student concerns and needs, administrative requirements, and teaching faculty workload. Becoming conscious of competing student schedules, recognizing the diligence and effort which create excellent teaching, and learning to assess the characteristics of classroom spaces are ways in which librarians become sensitized to the issues important to teaching faculty (Douglas 1999, 28-29). A teacher-librarian observed, “We now understand what it is like to teach a course: class preparation, revising, grading and dealing with students” (Donnelly 2000, 49).

- Priorities for developing the library collection can also be changed when academic librarians engage in classroom teaching. It is a valuable insight to discover what students are actually using versus what the librarians think they ought to use (Donnelly 2000, 48).

- Enhancing the librarian’s faculty status, and, at the same time, promoting the worth of the library are significant benefits. The academic librarian with faculty status may finally feel “equal” with other faculty (Auer and Krupar 2005, 52). Teaching competencies for academic librarians are major components of the job and are measured for promotion and tenure (55). The faculty’s view of librarians is improved as the librarians become academic colleagues and peers rather than part of the institution’s administrative support system. When a librarian is awarded tenure and promoted, the ultimate stamp of faculty approval is granted to the librarian (Borchuck and Bergup 1977, 11). The library also benefits since the individuals who provide the services are recognized as “professor librarians” (Douglas 1999, 25).

- Teaching can be enjoyable although all librarians won’t find this to be the case. There is “sheer joy” in mastering new content in order to educate others, plan teaching methods, and evaluate what is effective (Hall 1990, 104). The intellectual stimulation that emanates from sharing content with a class is incalculable (Partello 2005, 112). It is exhilarating to accept the primary responsibility for managing an entire class from designing the syllabus and writing assignments to assigning grades (Leonard 1989, 28).

- Self-improvement for the academic librarian is an unanticipated benefit of classroom teaching. Assigning a letter grade for a student also forces the librarian/teacher to assess his or her own performance in
ways not normally available in the course of library work (Leonard 1989, 33). In addition, student evaluations bring a sharp focus to our strengths and deficiencies. Teaching can allow librarians to learn to have increased patience with students at the reference desk, recognizing we also may have given assignment instructions that have been less than clear (Partello 2005, 112). One author also commented that librarians gain an “intellectual vibrancy” informed in part by the expectations for scholarship at their institutions (Riggs 1999, 305). Overall, teaching increases the librarian’s sensitivity to student questions and needs and promotes the learning of more effective ways to explain and demonstrate material (Donnelly 2000, 48).

CONCLUSION

The literature, anecdotal evidence, and personal experience all confirm that teaching classes for credit can be far outside the academic librarian’s comfort zone. Many librarians could empathize with one information literacy librarian’s statement, “I didn’t become a librarian because I wanted to teach. In fact the thought of teaching scared me to death” (Blakeslee 1998, 73). Rather than emanate from the librarian’s personal desire, the assignment to teach may result from the institution’s instruction-related needs or a library director eager to enhance the library’s visibility and prestige on campus. It is worth noting that this same librarian ultimately became a strong supporter for academic librarians becoming classroom teachers, articulating several of the benefits listed above in the course of describing her experiences (77).

After taking up teaching herself, conferring with colleagues, and studying and analyzing the literature on the topic, the author strongly advocates that academic librarians consider assuming this new responsibility. Of course, if the librarian actively dislikes the assignment, the request should be rejected if at all possible. However, when academic librarians agree to become classroom teachers, either after invitation or on their own initiative, a domino effect of benefits will undoubtedly occur. Whether accepting a teaching appointment with trepidation or pursuing one with intentionality, the librarian will navigate through an unexpectedly inspiring and stimulating environment.

One caveat, however, should be noted. It is a given that the practicality of local conditions must trump all other considerations. A change in appointment for the librarian may be possible or desirable when essen-
tial services in the library are buttressed with adequate staff and equitable compensation is provided by the institutional administration. If classroom teaching for the librarian means the library will suffer and be unable to provide the basic services for which the librarian was trained and hired, it would be imprudent to proceed with the appointment. While meaningful and valuable for the library and the academic librarian, classroom teaching is secondary to their core responsibilities. Thus, when local conditions permit and the librarian desires to make the commitment, classroom teaching for academic librarians is highly recommended.

Isn’t being a librarian enough? Yes, it most definitely is. Of course, librarianship is a profession in its own right with its own theory and practice, ethical standards, literature, and academic preparation (Hill 1994, 72). But, there is disagreement within the profession whether it is to be thought of as a “service profession or an academic discipline” (Mitchell and Morton 1992, 385). Librarians who consider it the former will be less likely to want to teach credit-bearing classes or engage in scholarly research, reasoning that they should support faculty who do both rather than assume the responsibilities themselves. One librarian restated this distinction by arguing that while librarians serve an important role in the “academic side of the campus administration,” they have a “different mission and professional grounding” from that of the faculty (Leonhardt 2004, 4).

However, if academic librarians view the profession as a discipline, then it follows that the same librarians may more readily embrace the faculty responsibilities of teaching and scholarship, teaching in their own discipline (or in other adjunct disciplines and fields), and doing “research-and-publication activity” (Mitchell and Morton 1992, 385). A university library dean recently pointed out that faculty librarians become “credible academics” who are more likely to have a say in deciding the criteria on which “academe will judge libraries in the 21st century.” It is a way to “increase the odds” that academic librarians will play a significant role in the rapidly changing world of higher education (Murray-Rust 2005, B10).

There is no doubt that academic librarianship will be immeasurably enhanced when librarians teach credit-bearing courses, either in their own discipline or in other subject areas offered by their institutions. Since academic librarians everywhere are being asked to do more with fewer resources, it is tempting to decline teaching opportunities when they arise. Unfortunately, waiting until conditions are optimal to engage in classroom teaching is also to risk losing valuable opportunities. As one
librarian who enthusiastically endorsed the experience of collaborating in an honors course said, “Carpe Diem!” (Woodard 1996, 143). It would be difficult to articulate a more succinct and forceful recommendation.

REFERENCES


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