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To Be or Not To Be: an Academic Library Research Committee

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The rise of faculty status for librarians at The Ohio State University (OSU) is reviewed. Faculty status eventually leads to greater emphasis on research and publishing as requisites for tenure and promotion. The Advisory Committee on Research (ACR) was formed in response to the research emphasis in order to: (1) promote research; (2) fund research; (3) establish a communication network; and (4) develop a policy for Assigned Research Duty (ARD), a policy which eventually led to non-assigned time. The article concludes the primary role of ACR is to promote a climate conducive to research among the faculty of OSU Libraries.

The movement toward faculty status and research for librarians at the Ohio State University (OSU) Libraries began in 1948 with the appointment of Lewis C. Branscomb as Associate Director of Libraries. This appointment was accepted on the condition that he be given academic rank and title. Because of his experience, Dr. Branscomb was convinced that librarians at academic institutions are part of the teaching faculty. During his tenure as Associate Director and then as Director of Libraries, Dr. Branscomb advanced the cause of faculty rank and title for librarians employed at the OSU Libraries.

The initial strategy in securing faculty status was to stress the academic qualifications of the staff. Librarians with Ph.D.'s, other advanced degrees, extensive academic experience, or in administrative positions in the OSU Libraries were recommended, one at a time, for faculty rank and title. By 1960, when the University Faculty Council appointed a committee to investigate the privileges and obligations of faculty status in the university community, one-fourth of the OSU librarians had academic rank and title. After two years of committee investigation with continual pressures from Dr. Branscomb and the librarians, the Faculty Council recognized the OSU librarians as a teaching faculty and granted the Director of Libraries the right to recommend librarians for academic rank and title.

Faculty status for librarians carried with it responsibilities, including teaching, research and publication, professional association activities, participation in university committees, and education, which are comparable to other teaching faculty members. The teaching responsibility of a librarian at OSU has been defined as "the assigned duties of the librarian." This definition may seem tautological but is exemplified in the preparation of the Libraries' collections for ready access by the student and researcher. Most of the Libraries faculty were assigned teaching responsibilities which left little time for their research and publication responsibilities.

Since 1972, the university administration has raised its standards for granting tenure, including a new emphasis on research and publication. The Libraries faculty has been no exception to these standards. As a result, research and publication are high on the list of priorities of all faculty members.

ESTABLISHMENT

The Advisory Committee on Research (ACR) was established by the OSU Libraries faculty at its November 11, 1971 meeting. ACR is composed of three faculty members appointed by the Director of Libraries and the Assistant Director of Libraries, Administrative Services, who serves as an *ex officio* member with voting privileges. The appointed Committee members serve terms of three years, which expire at one-year intervals.

The original charge to ACR was to promote research activities and projects by the Libraries faculty, to identify areas and/or interests to be investigated, to coordinate research activities within the faculty, to solicit funds and individuals to do research, and to publicize research activities. The Committee's initial activities were to collect articles and article citations on research and grantsmanship, to outline the purposes and functions of the Committee, and to develop policies and procedures that would facilitate research activities by the librarians.

The first year of the Committee's existence found the members asking questions, trying to find answers to questions, and then trying to find answers to questions that arose from previous answers. Several lines of inquiry were opened. Were there any funds available to the Libraries from the university administration? Had policy statements been developed by other university faculties concerning research which could be used as a basis for a Libraries' research policy? What were the projects currently under way in the Libraries? Were courses available on research methods which could be suggested to the Libraries faculty? What information could the Libraries Personnel Division provide on current policies concerning research? Finding the answers to these and other questions occupied the first year of the Committee's work.

The Committee's first *Annual Report, 1972/73* included a draft statement on the purpose and function of the Committee:

Purposes:

1. Encourage and support faculty research activities.
 - a. Library related research.
 - b. Projects of personal interest to the Faculty member.
2. Encourage and support staff research activities.

Functions:

1. Identify areas of potential research interest and solicit individuals to do the research.
2. Identify research fund sources within the University and from external sources.
3. Assist Libraries faculty and staff in all phases of research program planning.
 - a. Requesting release time.
 - b. Providing bibliographic sources for and education in research methodology.
 - c. Proposal preparation.
 - d. Seeking support, working with the OSU Research Foundation.
4. Serve as an advisory body on Libraries research policy to the Director of Libraries and to the Libraries Faculty.
5. Time.
6. Education.
7. Disseminate information regarding library research both within and without the OSU Libraries.

8. Maintain an awareness of University research policy development and support.

To fulfill these purposes and functions, the Committee felt strongly that a policy for providing adequate time for faculty research was of major importance.

RESEARCH TIME

Developing a policy for Assigned Research Duty (ARD) has been the most time-consuming project of the Committee since its inception. Although time to undertake research was not one of the charges to the Committee, faculty communicated this need soon after the Committee's creation. As indicated previously, the teaching responsibilities assumed by faculty members left little time for research activity.

ARD is a policy of allowing a designated amount of time from the standard work week to be used in conducting research. The policy was designed so that all faculty, except those in their first six months of employment, could apply for ARD. The policy also allows faculty members to request accumulated time for ARD.

A Request for Assigned Research Duty form (Appendix 1) was developed by the Committee to assist the faculty librarians in understanding the ramifications of his/her proposed research and to standardize the information that would be needed by the Libraries administration when processing the request. The ARD policy requires a research proposal to accompany the request form. This requirement was included to provide guidance to the applicant in planning the research project and to provide additional information to the Libraries administration. To assist the faculty in writing a research proposal and to encourage short proposals, ACR prepared a short guide for writing a research proposal. (Appendix 2)

The requests for ARD are submitted through the immediate supervisor, the department head, the appropriate assistant director, and, finally, the Director of Libraries. Each administrator comments on the request and indicates approval or non-approval. The Director of Libraries makes the final decision, thus providing consistency between public and technical services faculty. The Committee reviews each application and enters its comments on the request form, stressing the importance of the research and the quality of the method. The Committee does not comment extensively on the effect of the ARD on the applicant's responsibilities.

Originally, the Committee's comments were added to the request after all other comments except those of the Director of Libraries. After processing the first applications, ACR decided that its comments on the research would assist all the administrators who were required to review the request. This change was implemented. By being part of the review process, ACR is able to keep in touch with research activities in the Libraries and thus can advise in a more effective manner the administration, the individual researcher, and the potential researcher.

RESEARCH FUNDING

Locating financial support for faculty research was part of the original charge to ACR. The faculty researchers in the Libraries expressed a need for clerical assistance, supplies and other services. As research and publication became more important, the topic of securing grants received more attention from the Committee.

Assistance in grant proposal preparation has been available through the OSU Research Foundation for sometime; however, the Libraries faculty had not made much use of these

services. The Research Foundation was established to provide assistance to researchers at OSU. This assistance includes planning research and proposals for grant applications and administering grant money received. ACR has similar responsibilities to the Libraries faculty as the Research Foundation has to the university community. Thus, ACR has the added responsibilities of acquainting the Libraries faculty with the services of the Research Foundation and of encouraging faculty to use its services.

An additional opportunity to obtain financial support became available when the OSU Graduate School began a small grants program in January 1974. The purpose of this program is to provide "seed money" for faculty research projects. All full-time faculty are eligible to make applications for the grants, which are intended to benefit faculty members who have not received "substantial amounts of outside funding." At the encouragement of ACR, three grant proposals were developed by Libraries faculty members for submission in February 1974. Although the competition was university-wide, one of the fifty-three proposals awarded a grant was from the Libraries faculty. ACR will continue to encourage applications for this program.

RESEARCH PROMOTION

Ongoing activities of ACR have been the promotion of research activities and projects and the identification of areas for research. When research projects or article topics are identified by ACR, the subject is discussed by the Committee, and the faculty members to whom the topic may be of particular interest are identified. A Committee member will then informally contact the faculty member and suggest the project. Research projects originally identified by ACR members and now underway at OSU include (1) a directory of Ohio associations; (2) catalog card preparation; (3) cost-benefit analysis of OCLC cataloging; and (4) attitudes of library users toward book theft.

Committee members also encourage research through informal discussions with faculty members. These discussions usually concern ACR endeavors, research topics of interest to the individual, or published library research. If the faculty members desire assistance in formulating a research plan, they are invited to an ACR meeting to discuss their ideas. Discussions such as these are intended to crystallize the proposed research for the faculty member.

“The future role of the Advisory Committee on Research must be to educate the Libraries faculty to the meaning of research and its value.”

EVALUATION

An evaluation of ACR is most readily appraised through its activities. Among the issues considered were time to do research for faculty librarians; means of communication with the

Libraries faculty and administration about research; and the effective functioning of the Committee.

Within the Libraries research has generally been accepted as a necessary part of the faculty member's responsibility. The faculty have welcomed the concept of released time which can be used to meet this research responsibility and thus far, eight faculty have applied for and received ARD. The Libraries administration has responded positively to ARD. However, the Libraries cannot afford to hire additional faculty to assume the teaching responsibilities of faculty to receive ARD. As a result, some Libraries administrators are having difficulty accepting the concept of ARD, and some faculty subconsciously feel that they are expected to complete their traditional work as well as undertake research.

Although ARD was more or less accepted, the procedure was cumbersome. Recognizing that both preparing the application and processing it were time-consuming, the Libraries administration encouraged its faculty to consider an alternative solution. The solution approved by the faculty librarians was to define each faculty member's responsibilities to include a 20 percent time allocation, which could be used to undertake research and professional development. To be implemented in the Fall Quarter 1974, this policy gives each faculty member "non-assigned" time, which can be devoted to research. Thus ARD and its implementation has paved the way to a new Libraries policy, which provides for time to undertake research and which, in turn, implies a redefining and establishment of new policies and procedures for ARD. This aspect of the Committee's endeavor has been successful.

The establishment of a communication network concerning research has been difficult. Although the faculty requested and established ACR, individual faculty have not readily contacted the Committee either to develop research projects or to inform the Committee about research activity. The Libraries administration has not used the Committee as an advisory body, nor has it notified the Committee of research grant applications that it has approved. Because the Libraries are not an official member of the Graduate Faculty at OSU, they are not represented on the Graduate Council Research Committee, which originates many of the university policies on research. Only by improving its communications with the Libraries faculty, its administration, and the university will ACR become the resource necessary to fulfill its objectives.

Lack of direction has been the least obvious and the most difficult problem for ACR to handle. ACR sought direction by searching for information on similar committees at OSU or at other university libraries. Securing this information has been a difficult process, and after obtaining the available information, ACR discovered that other OSU committee activities were not applicable to ACR. The Committee has been unable to locate information on research committees at other university libraries. Consequently, ACR has devoted considerable time to self-searching, looking for its meaning and direction. Much time has been spent on this internal examination, possibly to the detriment of an action-oriented research promotion. However, by looking for its function, ideas, and activities within itself and by developing its own direction, ACR can feel confident as it advises the Libraries faculty and administration.

FUTURE

The successes of ACR indicate a place and a need for encouraging research. The lack of direction experienced by ACR indicates that the Committee needs to monitor and plan its activities carefully.

In its infancy ACR has had to struggle for each accomplishment. As the Committee

advances into adolescence, it has begun to question and to reach out. Items of concern are no longer accepted without question. ACR has become self-assertive and no longer waits for issues, problems or answers. ACR takes the initiative in (1) questioning a policy, (2) encouraging individual Libraries faculty, and (3) identifying areas that need research. Self-assertion must continue to be the essence of ACR.

To promote research was included in the original charge to ACR. Until now, this encouragement has not been a primary activity. Rather, ACR has been concentrating on "how to do" rather than "doing." Now is the time for ACR to become an action-oriented committee. Meetings must be problem-solving and reporting sessions. The real impact of the Committee will occur on an individual basis, either by personal contacts or by activities that bring the world of research to the attention of the faculty and staff when appropriate.

The future role of ACR must be to educate the Libraries faculty to the meaning of research and its value. Librarians traditionally are not research-oriented. This is as true of graduates of library schools today as it was of graduates a generation ago. ACR must seek ways to show librarians that they can benefit both personally and professionally, to indicate the relevancy of research to practicing librarians, and to demonstrate the impact research can have on improved service to library users. If this goal is accomplished, ACR will have made a significant professional contribution.

One specific way in which ACR can reach this education goal is to function as an information referral center. This does not mean providing information for the sake of information, but it does mean channeling specific information to specific people. By providing research topics relevant to the individual faculty, the Committee anticipates faculty librarians becoming more aware of and involved in a climate of research. Thus individual faculty members will become more knowledgeable of research methodology and of its application in a working situation. Areas of responsibility would be assigned to Committee members, and profiles of each faculty librarian would be developed and maintained so that specific projects could be routed to specific persons with stated interests. Beginning in this way leads quite nicely into the educational role that ACR should assume.

With these objectives — education and direction — to guide ACR, the future research activities hold great potential.

Whatever ACR sees as its future role, the real *raison d'etre* is to change and influence Libraries faculty attitudes. This is its meaning: to be or not to be.

APPENDIX 1
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

REQUEST FOR ASSIGNED RESEARCH DUTY

Name (Last) (First) Date

Library Department
Project Title
Project Objective
Project Description

Time Requirement: Estimate of hours required to complete research.

Activity *Unit / time* *Hours*

Total hours required
Total hours requested

Schedule being requested: From Beginning Date to Ending Date

Hours being requested:

(Signature) (Date)

Please comment and forward within a week following receipt;
Comment (Immediate Supervisor):

Approved () Yes () No
Comment (Department Head): (Signature) (Date)

Approved () Yes () No
Comment (Assistant Director):

Approved () Yes () No
Comment (Advisory Committee on Research):

Final Action:
Project Approved () Yes () No
Schedule Approved () Yes () No
If no, approved schedule is
Date report is due:

(Director)

(Date)

APPENDIX 2

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES *GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL*

The following four points are a general outline of the information which should compose a research proposal. It is not meant to be all-inclusive or definitive. Rather, it gives some indication as to sequence and breadth, allowing you to stress one area over another, e.g., creative writing would not have an extended listing of background literature. As to length, be brief and concise, probably a maximum of five pages. These guidelines are simplified, meant to be useful as an introduction to the writing of proposals. Feel free to consult any of the members of the Advisory Committee on Research for additional information.

- I. Statement of the problem and purpose of the project. Indicate in specific form your objectives, hypotheses and/ or questions. Why are you doing the research? What is your personal interest in the problem? Explain the problem and its significance for your field. If you are working on a bibliography, you might explain here why it would be useful or necessary,
- II. Summary of pertinent literature.
What important articles have been written about the sub-

ject of your proposed project. If something has been written, what is its status — is the material recent, is it a primary or secondary source? If you are working on a bibliography, you may want to list other bibliographies which have been prepared on the subject, or any single works which are especially pertinent,

- III. Procedure; Plan of Action,
What are you going to do? Where are you going to look? Where are you going to work? How long will it take? What will the result look, like? Some of this information overlaps that found in the request for Assigned Research Duty, but should be in more detail. If your research is of a technical nature, include here specific information on (a) population and sample, (b) the design, (c) data and instrumentation, (d) analysis, (e) time-schedule and (I) end-product, What preliminary work, if any, has been done and does this affect the proposal at hand?
- IV. Itemize any expected expenses related, to the research and indicate what, if any, income is anticipated which would help to defray the cost of the study,

•ACR used *How to Prepare a Research Proposal* by David R. Krathwahl (1966) and other proposal handbooks to prepare this document.