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Rebuilding the Profession: Recommendations for Librarians Interested in Becoming Academic Law Library Directors

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Rebuilding the Profession: Recommendations for Librarians Interested in Becoming Academic Law Library Directors*

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Based on papers presented at a 2005 workshop for individuals interested in becoming academic law library directors, this article begins by exploring the duties of academic director jobs—administrative skills and faculty responsibilities—before examining how to build credentials in preparation for such jobs. It concludes by focusing on the skills and knowledge needed to interview for director jobs.

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Introduction*

¶1 January 2005, Washington, D.C., breakfast during annual meeting of the Association of American Law Schools. A chance conversation provided the catalyst for the summer 2005 workshop for which these papers were prepared. Unfortunately, it was January 2005, much too late to get into the official programming cycle for the July 2005 Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) in San Antonio. Nonetheless, many felt that we needed to get something started right away. Under the leadership of Penny Hazelton, a workshop for aspiring academic law library directors was planned for Wednesday, July 20, 2005, during the AALL meeting. Robert Hu, newly arrived at St. Mary’s Law School as the law library director, made space available to us at no cost. And the information schools at the University of Washington and University of Texas were generous in sponsoring the workshop, so coffee and pastries were available for this low-budget event. Nearly sixty law librarians attended the four-hour program.

¶2 To determine the content for the workshop, we decided to concentrate on the most essential topics for law librarians interested in academic director jobs. Speakers limited their remarks to ten minutes, a tactic that left time for considerable discussion with the participants.

¶3 The first segment of the workshop focused on the duties of academic director jobs—administrative skills and faculty responsibilities. The latter was included because the vast majority of academic director jobs are faculty appointments. The middle session highlighted how to build credentials in preparation for director jobs. Here, scholarship, teaching, service, and job experience were emphasized. The formal presentations ended with a session on the skills and knowledge needed to interview for director jobs.

¶4 After the workshop, the workshop organizers realized the importance of the content that had been delivered and decided that the expertise of the faculty needed to have a more permanent home in *Law Library Journal*.

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So You Want to Be a Director?

*Overview**

¶5 One thing the authors of the following essays on becoming a law library director all have in common is that we are very excited about our jobs as academic law library directors. Some of us entered the profession with the specific goal of becoming a director, while others had careers before finding law librarianship. All of us have both law and library school degrees, and it is unlikely that many who lack this dual qualification will be appointed as new directors in the future. This parallels what is occurring on law faculties where entering law teachers often have PhDs in addition to their JDs; in fact, many new law teachers taught at the university level in their PhD subject areas before going to law school. This simply was not the case thirty years ago.

¶6 I have both bad news and good news for those who wish to become academic law library directors. The bad news is that not all of them can become directors. There simply are not enough academic directorships. With almost two hundred accredited law schools in the United States, only seven to eight director vacancies are generated each year. Some of these vacancies will be filled by sitting associate directors in those institutions. The good news is that a large number of the current directors are within five to ten years of retirement, and that will increase the number of vacancies up to maybe ten or eleven per year over the next decade. So there will be director jobs available, but still in relatively small numbers.

¶7 The profession has changed significantly since I entered it in 1968. At that time, there were many directors who had only one degree; dual-degreed directors were fairly rare. Becoming a director was somewhat a matter of serendipity or just being in the right place at the right time. By the time I became director at the University of Houston in summer 1973, I still had nine hours of law school to complete, which I did that fall. I was twenty-seven years old, which makes it a little embarrassing when someone asks how long I have been a director—thirty-two years. (I always hasten to explain that I was a child director.) It is unlikely that this will happen today. Librarians simply have more experience today before they become directors, and the pool of dual-degreed librarians has increased dramatically. But the profession does get people who are on the short track for directorships—librarians who have significant law practice prior to entering library school, librarians who were partners at their firms, and the like.

¶8 On the other hand, it is not the end of the world if you do not become a director. Many associate directors love their jobs and have no interest in becoming a director. There are many steps you can take to enrich your job. For example, work with your director to take on administrative duties. Begin research and publication projects and seek law school teaching opportunities—these are often available to librarians other than the director. Also, remember that on job satisfac-

* © Laura N. Gasaway, 2007.

tion surveys, librarians always rank among those who are happiest in their jobs and with their professions.

¶9 As you learn about the various aspects of a director's job, think about opportunities for teaching, scholarship, and the potential for travel, both domestically and abroad, in addition to administration. Moreover, getting to know other librarians, law faculty, lawyers and judges, and being able to contribute to the improvement of legal education through well-run and forward-looking libraries and library services makes our jobs wonderful.

*Administrative Skills**

¶10 So you want to be an academic law library director? Good for you! It is a rewarding career choice filled with exciting opportunities, but one that also has its challenges and hefty responsibilities as well. My role is to advise you on the skills you will need to develop now to be effective in the administrative role of a law library director.

¶11 Contrary to popular opinion, directors do not sit in their offices all day, dreaming up ideas to keep everyone else in the library busy. In reality, an academic law library director is running a multimillion-dollar, not-for-profit service organization. Our law libraries are pretty sizeable businesses that require solid administrative abilities as well as the talents that are necessary for achievement in an academic environment.

¶12 So what administrative skills should you develop to be a successful law library director? The business world is filled with literature on effective management, which I strongly advise you to add to your reading lists, but let me touch on three main areas for you to consider—managing library operations, managing law school involvement, and managing yourself—and three skills within each of these that I think you should master.

Managing Library Operations

¶13 As the one ultimately responsible for your multimillion-dollar enterprise, there are three essential skills in which every law library director needs to develop proficiency.

¶14 First, develop sound skills in personnel management. The people who work in your library are the most important asset you will have in running a successful service organization. Successful working relationships with your colleagues bring great rewards and go a long way toward keeping the focus on meeting user needs rather than on internal conflicts. Few things are more disabling to an organization than chronic personnel problems. There is a tremendous amount of excellent literature on good personnel practices, but there is no substitute for experience. Try to gain supervisory experience whenever you can.

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¶15 Second, you must understand money—not just how to get it and how to spend it—but an understanding that the strategic use of money is the key to effective management. As such, money must be well used, and that requires good planning and the realization that everything costs money. “Time is money” is not just a clever quip, but a truism of great importance. The cost of a title is not just the cost of the book and endless supplements, but additionally the cost of the personnel time, software and hardware, the space it will occupy on the shelf, and so on. A service costs the time, equipment, supplies, and materials it takes to meet users’ needs. Seize whatever opportunities you have to manage money. A good manager neither hoards nor spends lavishly, but instead spends strategically.

¶16 Third, develop leadership skills. If you don’t have a vision for the future, no one else in your organization will. Leaders articulate a vision, encourage and support their subordinates, provide needed resources, and then get out of the way. Leaders beckon others into the future; they don’t push from behind!

Managing Law School Involvement

¶17 Our libraries are embedded in larger organizations that share our ultimate goals but not always our priorities. As the library’s ambassador to the law school, there are three important abilities to master.

¶18 Know how to be a team player. Understand that in the swirl of demands placed on a law school’s resources, the law library is but one open mouth to feed. Appreciate the critical nature of components of the organization and the necessity in this rankings-driven world for each law school to be very strategic in how it uses resources. Never publicly grouse when others get the funding you want and need, but likewise never let your colleagues forget that every team player deserves a turn at bat.

¶19 Learn to negotiate. Within the competitive law school environment, you have to be prepared to negotiate for everything. Learn when to give and when to hold your ground. To do that you have to be very clear about what is essential to your library’s success long before you get to the negotiating stage—only then will you know when to dig in your heels. Give when you can; it will only improve your credibility when the next round of negotiations comes along. If you haven’t developed good negotiating skills already, do it now. You know who teaches negotiations in your law school—take them to lunch!

¶20 Learn to be an advocate. Most law library directors will be law-trained in advocacy skills, but remember, it is your job to be the voice of the library. Learn to articulate what is fundamentally important about the library to the law school. If you can’t make that case, your library will suffer. Understand clearly that, for better or worse, nothing is funded or approved within a law school unless it contributes to an improved standing in the rankings. In today’s environment, you will never be a successful advocate unless you frame your arguments with that clearly in mind. Start practicing those sound bites now!

Managing Yourself!

¶21 My final bit of advice won't take you by surprise, but nevertheless it bears repeating. Learn good work habits that will give you a shot at a healthy, balanced life. You will never be a truly successful library director without having a life!

¶22 Master time management skills. Without good time management skills you will either fail miserably or never see your home again.

¶23 Learn to delegate responsibilities. Delegating keeps your life under control and provides meaningful opportunities for others to develop management skills. Delegating does not involve dictating the method and then micromanaging the task. Rather, the key to effective delegation is to articulate clearly the results you need and then let those who have the assignment figure out the method to accomplish the charge.

¶24 Keep it all in perspective. A sense of humor really helps here! Have one and share it! Always remember that what you do is important work, but your library isn't the emergency room of a big city hospital. Nobody is going to die on one of your reading room tables if you don't get everything just right.

¶25 That's "Management for Law Library Directors 101" in a teeny, tiny nutshell. Keep in mind that every day each of us who is a director learns something new about the role. But there are some things that you *can* do now to help prepare yourself for the administrative aspects of the position.

*Faculty Responsibilities—Part 1**

¶26 The position of law library director is almost invariably defined as a law faculty position, though the title and incidents of the position may differ from school to school. New directors find themselves challenged by administrative responsibilities more demanding and more extensive than those they have faced in prior positions. Despite this unprecedented breadth and depth, however, new directors are well aware of the nature of these responsibilities and have spent their careers preparing to assume them. But because most law librarian positions below the level of director are not defined as law faculty positions, new directors simultaneously face faculty responsibilities they have not held before. New directors understand the general nature of these responsibilities but may be unsure how they specifically intersect with the administrative responsibilities of the job. Accordingly, preparation for the faculty side of the director's role is a critical element in the development of aspiring directors.

¶27 The first key realization is that the two sides of the role are both complementary and inherently conflicting. The director's participation in teaching, scholarship, and service activities as a faculty member generates tremendous knowledge and appreciation of issues facing the school's faculty and students, including matters within the director's administrative purview and issues that affect the library's

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role vis-à-vis the broader mission of the law school. At the same time, these activities absorb time that the director likely would otherwise spend attending to library and technology issues. Successful experiences in teaching, scholarship, and service may be required for the director to retain his or her position. Even so, performance evaluation, salary increases, job satisfaction, and other factors may be more closely tied to success in overseeing the library and technology functions that comprise the director's administrative responsibilities. New directors must act quickly to find the appropriate balance between the two sides of their role, particularly if they are on the tenure track and face an up-or-out review in a few years. New directors cannot afford to wait until the administrative side of the job is under control before attending to faculty responsibilities.

¶28 To move forward on both administrative and faculty responsibilities in the first year of the new position, new directors must have a clear idea at the time they accept the position of what will be expected, particularly with respect to the less familiar faculty responsibilities. Before accepting the position, the prospective director should have discussed the specifics of the faculty side of the role with the dean and the chair of the promotion and tenure committee or any other body charged with evaluating the director's performance of the faculty responsibilities. The prospective director should have received the law school and university rules regarding faculty responsibilities and perquisites. The prospective director should have negotiated a level of faculty support (research leave, travel funding, or other items) with the dean that is both consistent with the director's administrative responsibilities and comparable with support provided to other law faculty at the school. If the director is expected to teach regularly, the teaching package for the pre-tenure period should be worked out at this time. All of these understandings should be committed to writing to guard against the possibility of subsequent changes by new deans or higher university officials during the pre-tenure period.

¶29 The object of gathering specific information about the tenure standards and negotiating specific expectations and support is, of course, to allow the prospective director to evaluate the likelihood of achieving tenure in the new position and to understand what that will take. Standards for law faculty in general, and for law library directors in particular, vary greatly from school to school.¹ The only standards that matter immediately are those of the school that has offered you the position of director. Prospective directors must pay close attention to details such as the number, nature, and placement of publications that count toward tenure. Some schools have separate rules for the library director. Other schools apply the general rules for law faculty but with stated exceptions concerning the teaching or scholarship expectations of the library director. Still others hold library directors to exactly the same standards as any other member of the law faculty. Rules of

1. A representative collection of standards applicable to library directors at various schools is available at <http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~jgmilles/TenureStandards.pdf>.

this last type may or may not have been applied with variations to previous library directors. Past practices may provide some useful information, but it is the rules themselves, along with the director's negotiations with the dean, that will govern. It is appropriate for the prospective director to negotiate special understandings based on the unique demands of the library director's dual role, but the time to do so is before accepting the job, not as the tenure decision draws near.

¶30 New directors should understand that trends relating to tenure in general may affect expectations of them. The one most likely to affect new directors in the near future is the gradual but definite trend to remove various faculty positions—particularly those involving increased administrative responsibilities or decreased teaching and research activity—from the tenure track.² To some extent this trend seems based on the idea that the underlying reason for the tenure system—to protect academic freedom—does not apply to administrators. Prospective directors should be prepared to make the case that faculty status is important for library directors. In the following section, Barbara Bintliff argues cogently in support of this position.³ If the trend away from tenure for persons holding mixed faculty/administrative positions is gaining a foothold on campus, it may affect the prospective director's future regardless of the law faculty's evaluation of the candidate. New directors can protect themselves against this uncertainty by understanding the tenure rules and committing themselves to satisfying them to the letter.

*Faculty Responsibilities—Part 2**

¶31 As you prepare for an academic law library directorship, which should include a faculty appointment, it is important to have some context for the role of faculty within the university. Understanding some basic background information can put the interview process in perspective and give you a better understanding of what your responsibilities will be as a faculty member.

¶32 A unique characteristic of the American university is that one group of employees, the faculty, has significant responsibility for institutional governance. At most universities the faculty are given the primary role in decision making and policy setting in the areas of academic affairs and scholastic concerns, including the ethical dimensions of these areas. Academic affairs are those matters affecting teaching or the faculty, such as the right of individual professors to assign readings, choose textbooks, and organize a class, and group decisions on hiring, evaluating, tenuring, and promoting faculty. Issues of scholastic concern relate to the educational experience of the students, including determining degree requirements, establishing grading protocols, approving academic programs, and even

2. See generally Piper Fogg, *For These Professors, "Practice" is Perfect*, CHRON. HIGHER EDUC., Apr. 16, 2004, at A12 (discussing a category of full-time faculty members who concentrate on teaching but are not eligible for tenure).

3. See *infra* ¶¶ 41–46.

* © Barbara A. Bintliff, 2007.

setting the academic calendar. This *shared governance* is carried out primarily through the committee work required of every faculty member on campus. Shared governance committees exist at departmental, school/college, campus, and, if the university has more than one campus, systemwide levels.

¶33 Faculty are given these responsibilities, in large part, because their expertise is required to make the decisions. For example, faculty have the subject knowledge to understand fully their colleagues' teaching on particular topics, to evaluate each others' scholarly work, to deliver information and aid learning in their field, and to determine what knowledge is essential to qualify for a degree in a specific academic area. Faculty in the classroom on a daily basis have the experience to know what policies are needed regarding attendance, grading, and the myriad other issues that arise in the classroom. Students are among the beneficiaries of shared governance, as well-reasoned and appropriate academic and scholastic decisions are indispensable to a sound educational experience. Through committee work, faculty decisions are made and recommendations are crafted, which are then sent to the university's administration. Administrators will almost always have the final authority for these decisions but the process begins with the faculty, whose conclusions carry great weight. No single administrator, or group of administrators, could have the depth of knowledge required to make these other decisions about all the programs and faculty at a university.

¶34 An additional, essential ingredient for a strong educational experience is academic freedom, another unique characteristic of a university. Academic freedom is often defined as the atmosphere of free inquiry and discussion necessary to find and teach "truth" as the faculty member sees it. Without academic freedom, faculty would be hard-pressed to make discoveries, question existing practices, expand fields of knowledge, and communicate findings to students and others. Similarly, students could not be expected or permitted to question, to explore, to muse aloud, or to engage in critical thinking. Academic freedom encourages the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake.

¶35 Academic freedom provides for, and even anticipates, mistakes and failures. It accommodates changing tactics and starting over, and permits faculty to experiment without fear of losing their jobs. The give and take of the classroom, including the presentation of innovative and controversial ideas, made possible by academic freedom is particularly important to the students' education. Students learn critical thinking and how to form and defend their own opinions when they hear a variety of approaches to a topic. Academic freedom protects the university's intellectual endeavors in their many forms.

¶36 Above all, academic freedom is a privilege. It is granted to faculty and, almost always, students. Each university will establish its own definition of academic freedom, and faculty members have an obligation to understand the extent of this privilege at their home institution. Academic freedom comes with limitations, chief among them the requirements that faculty members must:

- maintain competence in their fields;
- exert themselves to the limit of their intellectual capacities in scholarship, research, writing, and
- act on and off the campus with integrity and in accordance with the highest standards of their profession.

¶37 Universities generally specify in their grant of academic freedom that faculty members should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matters that have no relation to the subject of the class. Typically, faculty members are admonished to refrain from conduct disruptive of university functions; from injury to persons or damage to property on the campus; and from impeding freedom of movement of students, school officials, employees, and invited guests to the university. Universities do not view these kinds of activities as being within academic freedom's pursuit of "truth."

¶38 Tenure is the strongest protector of academic freedom. Tenure is a form of employment security in which an employee—a faculty member—is given an indefinite term of appointment in return for meeting certain qualifying criteria and specified continuing performance requirements. It takes a period of years to earn tenure, with multiple evaluations by several layers of shared governance and administrative approvals during that time. It is an intensive and demanding process. Specific procedures for the grant and maintenance of tenure are published by every institution. Faculty must read and understand these procedures, asking for clarification when necessary. Tenure is not readily granted, and denial of tenure will almost always require a faculty member to find employment elsewhere.

¶39 The employment security offered by tenure makes it possible for faculty members to enjoy the full extent of academic freedom. Tenure was created to shield the expression of ideas and opinions from both internal and external pressure. It allows faculty members to research controversial issues and teach disputed theories without fear of retribution by their employer. It encourages creativity, ingenuity, and independent thought by faculty members, who do not need to worry about repercussions for what may be unorthodox (but legitimate) academic pursuits. Tenure lets faculty members spend years on a very specialized project without being required to find an application for the knowledge gained. Academic freedom and tenure go hand in hand in fulfilling a university's mission to create and disseminate new knowledge.

¶40 Shared governance also plays a role in maintaining strong academic freedom. For example, faculty are in a better position than administrators to understand and evaluate the intellectual pursuits of their colleagues. Faculty, who are themselves protected by tenure, can evaluate even the most controversial of their peers objectively and free from the scrutiny of outside pressure groups that can sway administrative deliberations. Similarly, faculty can better understand and adjudicate ethical issues involving student or faculty classroom behavior. Effective shared governance puts educational interests ahead of political considerations.

¶41 In law libraries, academic freedom plays out in several ways.

¶42 First, it explains the importance we place on consultation with faculty library committees and individual faculty members in the development of the collection and in major policies. Shared governance is integral to the operations of the academic law library. This is very significant, as it places the library squarely within the academic programs of the school and reinforces its place as the most permanent intellectual resource of the law school.

¶43 Second, it shields librarians in the provision of information services and the development of library services and programs. Librarians must have the ability to provide patrons with an array of materials, including those with controversial or disputed content, without fear of reprisal. Reference services, Web sites, and other library resources must be available to all, free from outside pressures.

¶44 Third, since information resources provide the intellectual foundation for the law school's teaching and research, academic freedom gives librarians the latitude to develop collections necessary to support the school's programs, recognizing that even controversial thinkers and writers need supporting resources. Law students cannot learn to think critically and respond effectively if they don't know the arguments "on the other side." Law faculty cannot test the strength of their own opinions without addressing the thoughts of others.

¶45 Fourth, it not only protects library directors as faculty members in their writing and teaching, but also all the other librarians who engage in the same activities (whether they are academic staff or faculty).

¶46 Shared governance and academic freedom are foundational concepts in the culture and operations of the American university. Efficient management of the law library and effective dealings with other faculty and university entities depend on understanding these concepts. Academic law library directors must have a working knowledge of how the institution's shared governance functions and recognize the role of academic freedom in university affairs.

Build Your Credentials

Scholarship—Part 1*

¶47 In the pre-tenure period, the library director should expect to be evaluated annually with respect to his or her progress toward achieving tenure. This process should give the director a good idea how he or she measures up to the expectations that will be applied at the time of the tenure decision. Evaluation of the director on the service and teaching components of the faculty role presents relatively little ambiguity. It is the rules of the specific school that matter, but some generalizations are possible. Service is likely to be evaluated on the basis of its impact on the profession of law or librarianship. Often, impact is measured by the nature of the

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director's participation (committee leadership, offices held in professional associations, and the like) and the level (state, national, or international) of the director's visible contributions. Success in teaching is commonly measured by the means regularly used at the specific school, often including both student evaluations and faculty peer evaluations.

¶48 At the hiring stage, the prospective director's main concern is demonstrating the ability to meet expectations that almost by definition have not been applied to him or her in the past. One useful piece of information is what the school expects of new faculty hired for their first teaching positions. If the school expects publications (post-law school) for new faculty, it may expect or prefer the same of law library director candidates. Aspiring directors should consider publishing a substantial article prior to seeking the first directorship even though that is unlikely to be expected (or rewarded) in the candidate's current position. Even if the specific publication does not match up with the school's standards for publications counting toward tenure, its completion is powerful evidence of the candidate's commitment to this aspect of the faculty role. Even a record of presentations that did not culminate in publication is evidence of the candidate's participation in professional discourse on important issues. Both publications and presentations can form the basis of a strong recommendation from well-respected law library directors the law school is likely to consult in connection with its director search.

¶49 For the achievement of tenure or other continuing appointment status, scholarship is often the most critical element. It is also the one that varies most from school to school. Law schools are not likely to count all types of publications equally—they have specific requirements for tenure. New directors should keep two factors in mind when considering any project for inclusion in the eventual tenure dossier: the school's requirements for the number, nature, and placement of publications, and the process by which publications will be evaluated. For example, the director may be committed to advancing knowledge within the profession of law librarianship rather than in law more generally. This approach has the dual advantages of showcasing expertise and demonstrating significant contributions to the specific field in which the director works. The tenure rules, however, may not take account of this possibility. They may contemplate publication of "law review articles" in student-edited law journals of a particular type or rank. It is difficult to know how peer-reviewed or faculty-edited journals associated with law librarianship would measure up against such a standard. The law school's promotion and tenure committee may have a process for advising pre-tenure faculty members on questions of this type. If this process cannot provide assurance that librarianship-related publications will count, then the new director will have to identify topics and placements that meet the school's rules. Specialized law reviews, bar journals, and other types of publications, in addition to traditional law reviews, may offer a promising avenue if acceptable under the specific school's rules. The new director cannot afford to pursue research projects that offer little hope of meeting the tenure standards.

¶50 It is also important for the director to understand the process by which publications are evaluated at the time of the tenure decision. Increasingly, university rules require evaluation by persons outside the employing university who are experts in the candidate's particular field.⁴ It is important when selecting a topic to think about who the potential evaluators of a publication on that topic might be. Outside evaluators are often selected by members of the law faculty who serve on the promotion and tenure committee; the candidate is sometimes asked to recommend people he or she considers experts in his or her field. Often it is helpful if the outside evaluators are already familiar with the candidate's work, but the evaluators will have to assure the committee that they are not too closely associated with the candidate. The experts who are most likely to be familiar with and supportive of the new director's publications are other library directors. To ensure that members of this group would be suitable reviewers of the director's dossier, it makes sense to select a topic that concerns or relates to law librarianship, information policy, intellectual property, the economics of legal publishing, the pedagogy of legal research, or the like. Under the standards of many schools, it is important to select a topic of importance to the field or to present an original idea or argument. This may be easier to achieve if the topic or field is a narrow one. New directors who keep these considerations in mind from the outset are likely to avoid some of the bumps in the road to tenure.

¶51 In sum, the scholarship dimension of the library director's role is sure to present challenges the new director has not faced before. Successful new directors will inform themselves early on of the nature of these responsibilities and develop sound strategies to meet them.

*Scholarship—Part 2**

¶52 The main points I wish to make about scholarship come not only from my own experience as an academic law library director (and director candidate) in a law school faculty tenure-track position, but also from my feelings about the importance of contributing to the literature of the law library profession. The latter stems, at least in part, from my service as editor of *Law Library Journal* since 1995. Let me hasten to add that while my comments about scholarship may differ somewhat from those of Martha Dragich Pearson,⁵ in no way do I disagree with her views about what it may take to build scholarship credentials sufficient to land an academic law library directorship or to achieve promotion and tenure once you

4. See generally Stephanie Pfirman et al., *Collaborative Efforts: Promoting Interdisciplinary Scholars*, CHRON. HIGHER EDUC., Feb. 11, 2005, at B15 (discussing special considerations in the tenure process for interdisciplinary faculty, including the difficulty of finding expert reviewers in the candidate's combined fields).

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5. See *supra* ¶¶ 47–51.

have the job. It's just that I can't help but look at scholarship as something that has value beyond those personal goals.

¶53 My first point might be best stated by offering a new slant on a familiar aphorism: "use your pre-director scholarship to kill two birds with one stone." What do I mean? Well, the first "bird" you're after with your stone (i.e., the writing you do *before* becoming a director) is to establish yourself as a credible director candidate for a faculty tenure-track position by demonstrating that you have a proven track record of scholarship. To do so you must offer writing that shows not only that you can think critically about a topic but also that you can articulate your analysis in a clear (and possibly even creative) fashion. Not necessarily easy to do, but this is what today's law school faculty are looking for in the existing scholarship of candidates for tenure-track positions, including that of library director. So at least some of your pre-director writings must be something other than descriptive or pure opinion pieces, no matter what the topic.

¶54 But another very legitimate "bird" that I fear too many librarians seeking to become directors lose track of is the opportunity to demonstrate to the faculty—*through your pre-director scholarship* stone—that you have the necessary expertise to be an outstanding library director. How can you do this? By choosing to focus on library- or information-oriented topics in your writing. Librarians writing today are actually blessed to be in an environment rich with difficult, complex topics related to libraries and information management that call for just the sort of critical analysis that faculty members expect from those in tenure-track positions. Recall some of the meaty topics librarians have taken on in recent years;⁶ these are issues whose importance can be grasped even by faculty members who have little or no knowledge of libraries or librarianship. If your writing demonstrates your understanding of them, you will be marked as a candidate who not only can meet the increasingly stringent tenure requirements for scholarship but can also do what should be just as important to faculty members—run their library. So writing critically about important *library*-related subjects can serve to kill two birds with one stone—demonstrate your ability to do law school tenure-track level scholarship *and* establish your credentials as a thoughtful, capable librarian familiar with

6. E.g., Robert C. Berring, *Legal Information and the Search for Cognitive Authority*, 88 CAL. L. REV. 1673 (2000); Richard A. Danner, *Electronic Publication of Legal Scholarship: New Issues and New Models*, 52 J. LEGAL EDUC. 347 (2002); Barbara A. Bintliff, *From Creativity to Computerese: Thinking like a Lawyer in the Computer Age*, 88 LAW LIBR. J. 338 (1996); Paul Douglas Callister, *Beyond Training: Law Librarianship's Quest for the Pedagogy of Legal Research Education*, 95 LAW LIBR. J. 7, 2003 LAW LIBR. J. 1; Laura N. Gasaway, *Libraries, Users, and the Problems of Authorship in the Digital Age*, 52 DEPAUL L. REV. 1193 (2003); James G. Milles, *Leaky Boundaries and the Decline of the Autonomous Law School Library*, 96 LAW LIBR. J. 387, 2004 LAW LIBR. J. 25; Samuel E. Trosow, *The Database and the Fields of Law: Are There New Divisions of Labor?* 96 LAW LIBR. J. 63, 2004 LAW LIBR. J. 5.

cutting-edge issues that affect the entire law school and legal communities, not just librarians.⁷

¶55 For my second point about scholarship, I urge you to remember that there are “many of them and only one of you.” This too relates to the subjects you choose to write about, both in your pre-director librarian stage and then later as a library director. While it is tempting to focus strictly on law-related topics on the theory that that’s what law faculties are looking for, remember that in a law school there are many law teachers but only one law library director. A perceptive faculty—and if you have a choice, wouldn’t you rather work at a school that has such a faculty—will recognize this and be looking for director candidates with demonstrable *library* expertise, not individuals who know a lot about torts, property, or other substantive legal topics, since they have plenty of those already. As I’ve already indicated, your library expertise can be evidenced by your existing (and future) scholarship, *if you write about serious, thought-provoking library-related topics*. So don’t think that articles on such topics won’t help you become a law library director. And even with faculty members who are initially skeptical about the worth of such articles, remember that you will have the opportunity in the interview setting (and perhaps in a job talk as well) to explain not only why you have written them but also why they should be happy (and impressed) that you have.

¶56 A final reason for writing on library-related topics before you become a director is that doing so can legitimize in the minds of the faculty the scholarship agenda you will pursue once you are hired as director. That is, if you come to the job with a track record of such writing, expectations for the scope and nature of the scholarship in which you will engage *thereafter* are already established. Your pre-director work stakes out the boundaries of the work you will do as a director. Certainly no one can claim to be surprised that you write about library subjects as a director if you did so before becoming one.

¶57 A third point: don’t forget to “be true to yourself.” Your best scholarship—which is what you want to be able to show to potential employers—will come from writing on topics about which you are passionate, *whatever they might be*. Thus, don’t choose a topic just because you think it will look good on your vita, choose it because you are genuinely interested in exploring the subject, whether for job-related reasons or simply to satisfy your personal curiosity. Writing is hard enough as it is without sticking yourself with a topic for which you have no interest, so find something that you feel strongly about. Such a topic will keep you

7. A related benefit of writing about important, library-related topics is that you will have a step-up in your preparation to answer questions and present a thought-provoking job talk when you interview for director positions. For instance, if you have written about the complexities of developing a collection in an electronic environment, you will be ready to speak intelligently about it during the interview process and during a facultywide presentation. Doing so in both settings can go a long way toward demonstrating your acumen as a library professional. See *infra* ¶¶ 105–07 for further information about job talks.

motivated in the “dark days” when the research and writing seem endless, and, inevitably, the final product will be much better because it will be invested with the energy your passion brings to it.⁸

¶58 Finally, as law librarians, we all have a responsibility to contribute to the literature of our profession. There exists a rich body of writing about law libraries and librarianship,⁹ but like all literatures, it must be constantly replenished, both to explore new topics and areas of concern and to reconsider existing topics that may be ripe for new thinking because of environmental changes or altered circumstances. I don’t mean to get too high horse about this—after all, I’ve urged you to explore topics about which you are passionate, and that could certainly include ones that have nothing to do with law libraries or legal information—but not only are we best qualified to do it, we are probably the only ones who *will* do it. And among law librarians, the burden falls disproportionately on those of us in the academic sphere because, unlike most of those in other types of law libraries, we are actually *rewarded* for engaging in research and writing. It is part of our job. So, as you try to figure out how to use your scholarship to best position yourself as an attractive academic law library director candidate, take care not to lose sight of the wider profession of which you are a part. I hope that my earlier comments about two birds and one stone will be sufficient to convince you that doing so will not only *not* hurt your chances, it might even improve them.

*Teaching**

¶59 Teaching is a coin of the realm in law schools. Consequently, there are many benefits that can accrue to law library directors who are good teachers. First, teaching is intellectually challenging and stimulating. As interesting as the management portion of a director’s job may be, it is not the same thing as mastering a legal subject and then interacting with students about that subject. Second, contact with students is truly wonderful, and through teaching you have the opportunity to work with them beyond the classroom and advise them on their careers. Students keep you young and engaged in the intellectual enterprise of the law school. Many of them will stay in contact with you throughout the years. Third, through teaching you truly become a faculty member and colleague of the other faculty members.

8. For recent examples of such writing by law librarians, see Susan Nevelow Mart, *Let the People Know the Facts: Can Government Information Removed from the Internet Be Reclaimed?* 98 LAW LIBR. J. 7, 2006 LAW LIBR. J. 1; Katherine K. Coolidge, “Baseless Hysteria”: *The Controversy between the Department of Justice and the American Library Association over the USA PATRIOT Act*, 97 LAW LIBR. J. 7, 2005 LAW LIBR. J. 1; Nancy Carol Carter, *American Indians and Law Libraries: Acknowledging the Third Sovereign*, 94 LAW LIBR. J. 7, 2002 LAW LIBR. J. 1; Gordon Russell, *Re-Engineering the Law Library Resources Today for Tomorrow’s Users: A Response to “How Much of Your Print Collection Is Really on WESTLAW or LEXIS-NEXIS?”* LEGAL REFERENCE SERVICES Q., 2002, no. 2/3, at 29.

9. In 2008, *Law Library Journal* will celebrate its centennial with the publication of its hundredth volume.

* © Laura N. Gasaway, 2007.

The same classroom issues that matter to faculty also matter to you. Teaching establishes an area in which you can bond with your faculty colleagues, since curricular issues will take on the same personal dimension for you as it does for them. These strong bonds also deepen the faculty's overall trust in the director in his or her management role. Fourth, being a law school teacher creates credibility with faculty throughout the university and opens doors to important committee appointments that are not available to administrators.

¶60 Nonetheless, there are some negatives for a director who takes on teaching responsibilities in addition to those of administering the library. A director who teaches law courses is actually performing two jobs, both of which are extremely time-consuming. Law teaching takes enormous amounts of time for preparation. Moreover, one must be available to meet with students outside of class. Of course, availability online or through e-mail is also expected by today's law students. Thus, time management is a real issue, but it is a "good thing" to have the faculty think the director is Wonder Woman or Superman!

¶61 There are three main points I want to make about teaching. Take advantage of every teaching opportunity in the law school. Do a good job with your teaching. Pay attention to student evaluations.

Take Advantage of Opportunities to Teach

¶62 There are many opportunities for a director to teach within a law school. Often a librarian can gain teaching experience by offering individual research classes in courses taught by other faculty members, such as how to conduct legal research in bankruptcy law or intellectual property. Similarly, the library can offer short workshops on legal research as refresher sessions. Librarians frequently enter law teaching through skills courses such as legal research and advanced legal research. If one has practiced law or has other professional legal writing experience, then teaching a section of legal writing can also be an entry into law teaching, and schools always need writing instructors. Think creatively about the best way for you to gain teaching experience so that you will be ready to take advantage of the opportunities to teach a substantive course that might arise.

¶63 One way to break into teaching a substantive law course is to determine what is not currently being taught in the law school. Has a faculty member recently retired, leaving courses not covered? Has the faculty sought to hire a new person in a particular area such as wills and trusts and been unsuccessful? There are at least two directors currently teaching these subjects who got started because of their schools' needs in that curricular area. Many directors teach intellectual property, especially copyright, which is really a hot area now, but that was not always the case. In fact, it was really a backwater when I started teaching it in 1978—no one else at Oklahoma had any interest in teaching the subject. So, there may be courses in which no current full-time faculty member has an interest. Talk to the academic dean and volunteer to teach the course.

¶64 Another way to gain entry into substantive teaching is to develop a seminar that is not currently in the curriculum. The advantage of beginning with a seminar is that it gives you time to develop subject matter proficiency as well as to work with students on their writing. Moreover, over time, seminars are often converted to regular courses as the teacher gains expertise in that area and student demand for the course increases.

¶65 You do not have to wait to become a director to start teaching. In fact, previous teaching experience can be a plus when you are interviewing for a job. There are associate directors who teach law courses. Two words of caution, though. One, library school teaching does not count—it is fun to do but you earn no points with the law faculty for doing so. So choosing to teach in a library school program may not be the best choice if doing so means you will not have time to also teach in the law school. Law teaching is what counts. Two, there is likely no additional compensation for teaching. You may be able to negotiate a salary supplement for teaching, but many law schools simply consider it a part of your job. The benefits for teaching are huge regardless of additional salary increments, however, and while everyone likes money, the rewards are not all financial.

Do a Good Job with Teaching

¶66 Remember that you must develop not only subject matter expertise but also teaching skills. It is not enough to teach just as you were taught. Knowledge about and interest in how adults learn is beginning to be recognized in the law school world, and it is slowly changing legal education. Librarians must not be left behind, so you must also focus attention on honing your pedagogical skills. Even though you may not have had syllabi from most of your law school courses, students are starting to demand them, so always do one and make it available as early as possible, perhaps on the Web. Librarians who teach should make classroom technology an integral part of their courses, but they must use it well. Interestingly, students expect it of librarians. Also, you can model the use of technology for other faculty members.

¶67 Prepare, prepare, prepare. It takes considerable time to prepare for each class session, not only for the subject matter to be covered that day but also the method used to cover it. I do most of my preparation for the week on the weekends, but I also need one to two hours before each class for preparation. Honestly, I work many hours on my teaching, but I do love it. It is impossible to do your administrative work and prepare for teaching in a forty-hour work week.

¶68 Especially as a new teacher, you should practice each class session—and do it out loud. Teaching may be intuitive for some, but that's not the case for everyone. Practice for timing, to make sure that the technology works properly, and that you know how to operate the equipment. How much practice you will need is an individual thing, but it is far better to have too much preparation than too little. Further, practice will increase your own comfort level for the class session and permit you to be more spontaneous.

Pay Attention to Student Evaluations

¶69 It is important to learn how students learn. In recent years, law schools have begun to pay attention to the research on adult learners, and, as a result, law teaching is changing. Law schools themselves are sponsoring colloquia on teaching, and you should participate in these. Campuses often provide help to faculty through teaching and learning centers, and you should take advantage of their offerings to improve your teaching skills. Additionally, there are also both local and national programs on teaching offered by the Association of American Law Schools and other organizations. Go to these workshops and programs. Most really good teachers never stop trying to improve their teaching skills.

¶70 In many law schools, faculty actively discuss teaching. Librarians should participate in these formal and informal conversations. Find out who are the best teachers in your school and ask to sit in on their classes. Observing a variety of outstanding teaching can help you develop a style of your own. It is also important to network nationally with others who teach legal research or in your substantive area and to share ideas about teaching with them.

¶71 In conclusion, seek opportunities to teach, but make sure that you do it well! The rewards include a strengthened position for the library administration but also a continually engaging career and intellectual stimulation. Librarians who teach are engaged in the entire educational enterprise of the law school and can serve on all of the committees within the school, such as tenure and promotion and post-tenure review as well as similar university-wide committees on teaching awards and the like. Finally, teaching is just plain fun. The hard work is rewarded many times over, both personally and in respect for the director and the library itself.

*Service**

¶72 Service is the third component of a faculty member's responsibilities. Along with teaching and scholarship, it is one of the three areas in which a faculty member's performance is evaluated, annually for salary increase purposes, as a "progress review," and for promotion and tenure purposes. Service is most commonly done through committee work. Participation on a law school hiring committee, the curriculum committee, and the library committee are examples within the law school itself of service activities. Campuswide and, for those at multibranch institutions, university systemwide service opportunities are also available.

¶73 Such service activities contribute to shared governance, whereby faculty members are given the primary role in decision making and policy setting in defined areas of academic affairs and scholastic matters. As indicated earlier, shared governance is integral to the maintenance of strong academic freedom.¹⁰ For these reasons, service is a fundamental responsibility for faculty.

* © Barbara A. Bintliff, 2007.

10. See *supra* ¶ 40.

¶74 For many of us, service is a very interesting and appealing part of faculty life. It calls on the characteristics that led us into librarianship in the first place: an appreciation of collaboration and brainstorming with others to solve problems, a “higher calling” to contribute to more than just matters of personal interest, and the enjoyment of working with a group to advance institutional goals. Service is an excellent way to meet people, learn more about your law school and its parent institution, forge your reputation, and affect the direction of the law school or university. The right service achievements can demonstrate:

- leadership, and a big-picture view of the law school;
- the ability to work with many different people;
- organizational skills, including the ability to complete, in a timely manner, large, complex, or important projects; and
- a commitment to the institution or the profession.

¶75 Most of us could spend almost all day, every day, in service activities for a variety of reasons: because we find them interesting; because the law school’s administration wants someone who is organized and effective (i.e., the library director) involved in many facets of running the school; and because other law faculty members usually are happy to abdicate all their service responsibilities to someone who will actually do it.

¶76 Depending on your university’s policies, you may get “credit” for service rendered to outside organizations (i.e., municipal boards and commissions, state government, professional associations). Usually there is an understanding, often unspoken, that service to outside organizations “counts” if it allows you to make use of your academic expertise. Some universities give release time to faculty for outside activities like consulting (both paid and volunteer), but do not consider it service. For many law faculty members, however, service to the law school is the most valued service because of its immediately apparent results.

¶77 Despite its importance to the institution and regardless of our own interests and inclinations, however, service is generally considered the least important of the package of faculty responsibilities. Teaching is the reason universities exist, and we value teaching performance highly. Research and scholarship are the reputation-makers, for both the institution and the faculty member. At most law schools, regardless of what their written documents state about the value given to teaching, research and scholarship are the most valued activities of a faculty member. In most faculty members’ minds, service is just an administrative time-waster.

¶78 For this reason, as a new law faculty member, be careful that you not overdo your service obligations. Committee work can take over your life, and other faculty members will be glad to shovel all their obligations on to you. Although many faculties are considerate of junior members, some are not, and you can quickly find yourself on three or four or five law school committees, when the standard “committee load” is one or two. Do not let your dean or your faculty take advantage of you and give you a much heavier service load than oth-

ers carry. Similarly, do not make huge service commitments until you have strong, continuing achievements in teaching and research, probably no earlier than four or five years into your job and preferably not until you are tenured. This includes chairing committees and serving on huge time-consumers (for example, serving on the curriculum committee during a year when wholesale curricular reform is being attempted).

¶79 Early in your career, focus your service on activities that will highlight your strengths and show your abilities. Request specific committee assignments, and tell your dean why you are doing it. Most deans are willing to consider a request like this, especially if you explain why. There is a hierarchy of committee service in every law school, and receiving an appointment on a committee considered “important” is both prestigious and considered a sign of your good standing in the law school community. Committees generally thought to be the most important include those dealing with appointments, recruitment, or hiring; budget, salary, or both; peer evaluation (including promotion and tenure); and the dean’s advisory committee. All others, including those that deal with curriculum, student affairs, the physical plant, technology, the library, and the legal aid clinics are, by and large, not as well regarded.

¶80 Furthermore, at least early in your career and probably until you are tenured, you should focus on service to the law school and not become too involved in campus or systemwide service activities. While all tenure decisions go through multiple levels of approvals, the initial and most important approval comes from the law faculty. You want your record to be understandable to them, and law faculties frequently are unappreciative of activities outside the law school. They will consider time spent on such activities as a negative if there are any concerns about your teaching or publication records. For the same reasons, you should consider scaling back professional association activities during your pre-tenure years. Some continuing professional involvement is a good idea, but be selective. There is always time, post-tenure, to make your mark in AALL.

¶81 Be mindful, especially early in your career, that service has the potential for political ramifications. Any activity can be political on occasion, from technology implementation plans to admission of law students, but some areas are predictably so. For example, a committee with a charge that involves investigations, such as research misconduct inquiries, student honor code adjudications, or student disciplinary hearings, can become adversarial. Search committees for deans and higher-level administrators occasionally become contentious, generally as the committee’s work reaches a conclusion and the media become involved. Similarly, campuswide leadership positions often require that you take stands on controversial topics and place you in the spotlight. The problem is that some faculty will “remember” positions you’ve taken, and will hold those against you. They may say their concern is with your teaching or your writing, but that’s sometimes a cover for their anger over a political position.

¶82 As you carry out your faculty service responsibilities, remember that service may not be considered as important as teaching and research but it unquestionably affects your career. Your reputation, if not your pocketbook, can be enhanced by service well done and tarnished by poor performance. Do a good job regardless of what commitment you make; you never know what great future opportunities may arise from the least of your committee assignments.

*Job Experience**

¶83 Forty years ago it was not uncommon for a dual-degreed librarian to go directly from earning his or her MLIS or JD (as long as the other degree was part of their educational experience) to an academic director's job. Substantial law library experience prior to earning both degrees characterized those early graduates, and a move into high administrative positions as soon as both degrees were earned was common due, in part, to the small number of lawyers with master's level credentials in library and information science.

¶84 As the number of dual-degreed law librarians slowly increased in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the path to directorship began to take longer. The first professional job after finishing either the law or library science degree was usually in an entry level law library position, not the associate or director's job.

¶85 So, for the past twenty-five years, the career path to an academic directorship could be characterized as moving from reference librarian to head of reference to head of public services to associate law librarian to director. This path could take eight to ten years. Some librarians made these moves within the same institution as higher level positions became available; others had to be willing to relocate in order to move up to more responsible positions.

¶86 Academic law library directors are hired by the faculty of the law school. In evaluating candidates for a director position that will be tenured or on a tenure-track, the faculty members will look at their scholarship and teaching, activities they understand and can easily evaluate. Faculty are less knowledgeable about the other administrative work performed by academic law library directors, though they do seem to understand that experience with personnel management, budgets, technology, and all aspects of library operations is essential.

¶87 Making the career move from an associate director's position to the director is pretty understandable to the faculty hiring committee. Thus, if you have secured an associate position and performed well, being hired for a director's job is part of the natural progression. However, many academic law libraries no longer have a traditional associate director position. If these high level administrative positions, easily recognized by faculty hiring committees as providing the training ground for directors, are disappearing, where will young librarians who aspire to directorships get their relevant experience? Is there another way to move up in

law libraries without following the reference librarian to middle-management to associate director route? How long will it take?

¶88 In recent years, reference librarians in academic law libraries have been hired as academic directors. How did they move to a director's job without having the associate director position first? After all, not every great reference librarian will be a great director.

¶89 Good credentials and significant law library experience at prestigious law schools will certainly help. However, those who have been successful following a nontraditional path have worked purposefully to build their experience and skills. No matter what job title they had, they kept adding to the range of skills they were learning. If they had never taken on the management of a complex project, they found one and did a superb job making it work. If they did not have personnel experience, they negotiated for the opportunity to supervise student or part-time workers. No budget experience? They managed the budget for a smaller unit of the library or offered to work with the director on budget requests and expenditure reports. Scared of numbers? Then they analyzed statistics for the library, creating appealing visuals that helped make the case for a particular budget need or were used in the library's annual report. No teaching experience? They arranged to teach a research segment in another class, to give presentations, or to offer training sessions.

¶90 Be certain that your curriculum vitae reflects the substance of your experience, regardless of the job titles you have held. Mention the magic words in your cover letter as well. If you can show a progression of more and more responsibility in your jobs, this will impress the hiring committee. Select your references carefully and be sure they can give concrete examples of your accomplishments and skills.

¶91 Aspiring academic directors often want to know if they should move from one library to another or if it is better to stay in one law library for their pre-director employment. While the answer really depends on the particular situation, it is fair to say that moving up and gaining more and different experiences is what is important. It can be done in one library if your supervisors are willing to help you gain more job skills. If you are at a dead-end in your current job, then you should look around for a more responsible position with another institution. Few faculty will criticize you for moving every two to three years to new, more responsible jobs.

¶92 If you have a choice, do you take a pre-director job at a prestigious law school or one in a lower tier where you might have a broader scope of responsibilities? There are no easy answers here. We are in higher education and names do matter, especially to law faculty. However, never take a job where you do not like the people you would be working with or the job itself just because it is at a prestigious school. You are likely to perform poorly, making a good reference impossible.

¶93 If you have a head of public services position in a third-tier law school, can you move to take a head of reference position in a higher ranked law school? Such a move would appear to be a step down if you just looked at job titles. However, if you can demonstrate that you had more management or budget responsibilities in the new job, such a move would not be a detriment to your ultimate goal of becoming a director.

¶94 Can you move to a director's job from another type of law library like a court, county, or firm? Again, the answer depends on the nature of the position in the nonacademic library, the experiences you had, and the skills that you mastered. A law firm librarian who has been teaching part-time in a law school and judging moot court competitions may be a more attractive academic director candidate than a firm or academic librarian with no teaching experience or connection to law school. Scholarship and teaching are rarely valued in the nonacademic sectors of the law library profession. The crucial factor is not that the candidate has worked in a different kind of library, but that the candidate does not have the writing and teaching experience that is the coin of the realm in law schools.

¶95 And finally, should you take an associate or high level administrative position in the law library where you would someday like to be the director? The internal candidate has several advantages: (1) the faculty know you and your strengths, and (2) you know the institution and the library staff, so you would not require so much time to get up to speed were you to become the director. A disadvantage is that the faculty knows you and your weaknesses. Also, the faculty and library staff know you in your current capacity and may have trouble seeing you as the boss. Finally, as an insider, you will have very little leverage in negotiating with the law school for salary, benefits, and library support. The law school will always assume that you would rather have the job than not—this fact gives it the upper hand.

¶96 If you decide to compete as an inside candidate for a director's job, you must be treated like all other candidates, including the same length and scope of interview and review by the hiring committee. Above all, be prepared not to be selected. Think long and hard about how you will feel if the law school chooses someone else as the director. Will you be happy and productive continuing as the associate with someone else in the job you wanted? If you cannot face the possibility of failure, don't put yourself in the running.

¶97 Somewhere along the line, you will need to understand exactly what attributes and skills are needed to be successful and happy as an academic law library director. As you assess your own strengths and weaknesses and measure them against the needed skill set, you can direct your career path into positions that will augment your experience and prepare you for an academic law library director's job. As Barbara Bintliff said, "Take charge of your career."

Stalking a Law Library Directorship*

¶98 The process of interviewing for a directorship is significantly different from that for any other librarian post, and for that reason, preparation for such an interview requires consideration of multiple factors ranging from potential audi-

* © Michelle M. Wu and Charles J. Ten Brink, 2007.

ence members to political pitfalls. The following material considers the phases of interviewing in sections, examining in detail: (a) job posting and application, (b) pre-interview preparation, (c) the interview itself, and (d) post-interview follow-up and expectations.

Job Posting and Application

¶99 From the inception of the search, the difference between this job and any other librarian job becomes apparent. To begin, the search committee will consist largely of members of the faculty. Frequently this committee will be separate from the usual appointment committees for other faculty hires, although the procedures followed by the committee will be substantially similar. Committee composition varies widely from university to university, and candidates should pay special attention to committees where the library is unrepresented as this absence, coupled with some other factors discussed later, could signal a political disconnect between the library and the law school.

¶100 The posting itself will go not only to the usual law library discussion lists and publications, but also directly to sitting directors, deans, and faculty, seeking nominations. The goal is to obtain the names of nationally known leaders in librarianship, and preferably those already known to deans and faculty. Although candidates may respond directly to job postings, applications are much more favorably considered if they are preceded by a nomination and a subsequent invitation to apply. Such a nomination by a faculty member, director, or dean will have the greatest sway over a law faculty committee, and candidates should carefully consider the prestige and persuasive power of their nominators.

¶101 Applicants should bear in mind that many newly posted positions may be vacant due to the retirement of a long-sitting director, and that the committee and the faculty generally may be unfamiliar with the recruitment and interview process. This unfamiliarity can cause them to misstep, and a candidate should be prepared to handle potentially awkward situations diplomatically. For example, as noted earlier, it may not occur to them to invite library staff to serve on the search committee. If handled delicately, a query from a candidate could result in a librarian addition to the committee.

¶102 After reviewing applications, the committee will contact candidates who passed the first screening process. Be prepared for this process to take weeks or even months; the pace of faculty hiring is even more stately than that of academic librarians. As a first step, the committee will often conduct a preliminary telephone interview or schedule a pre-interview meeting. Both of these tools are used to pare down the list of applicants to a reasonable number before presentation to the faculty. Both will typically last one to two hours and involve meeting the committee members only, and possibly the dean if he or she is not a member of the committee. If the committee remains interested after this initial meeting, a candidate will be invited to participate in a full-fledged interview.

Pre-Interview Preparation

¶103 A candidate's investigation of the university, law school, and library will have begun even before the application, but once a candidate has been invited to interview, the investigation should intensify. It will not only allow the candidate to better anticipate questions, but will also inform him or her as to the challenges facing this directorship.

¶104 Beyond the usual checks on faculty interests, names, and special law school programs, informal queries frequently will produce the most useful information. Faculty, in particular, serve as tremendous resources, as the law school community is small and very well connected. Faculty at the candidate's existing institution can provide information about the other law school, its faculty, or both. They will usually be aware of the major political issues swirling within that institution, and may even be able to summarize how the faculty there feel about their library and librarians. Reaching out to other law librarians, including sitting directors, may reveal additional issues, including comments about the library's relationship with its faculty and administration.

¶105 The information gathered can then be absorbed to better field politically charged questions, and it is well to remember that all questions beyond "did you have a pleasant trip" are politically charged. In any given session with the faculty, the candidate may not know the motives and political inclinations of the attendees; each audience is likely to contain both library advocates and library detractors. Failure to be aware of undercurrents may result in an answer that unintentionally adds fuel to an existing debate between various faculty factions or between the library and the faculty. For example, it is not uncommon for faculty to ask how a candidate would have handled a situation recently encountered by their own library (e.g., "I can't believe that I haven't received an ILL that I placed a *week* ago! How would you prevent this from happening?").

¶106 In answering both direct and indirect questions, interviewees should be careful to avoid passing judgment on another library and its actions. By responding to the question outright, you run several risks: (a) the hypothetical offered may exclude critical factors, and the response may be seen to adopt a position that you would not have taken had all of the facts been disclosed, (b) you may alienate the library staff needlessly,¹¹ and (c) if you are hired, faculty may remember the response to this question and hold you to it. It is important to seize control of these questions as firmly and tactfully as possible. You might describe techniques employed for improving services in your current position, or general attitudes toward and talents for motivating employees and creating a service-focused organization.

11. Remember, faculty and librarians do talk, especially where there's a liaison program in place. Even if a candidate expresses an opinion in a meeting limited exclusively to faculty, that information will be shared with others, including the library staff.

¶107 As important as understanding the politics of the institution is an awareness of the position's responsibilities. The status of directorships is varied, from pure administrative appointments to continuing appointments to librarian tenure tracks to full law faculty tenure. Even within each option, questions of voting rights, security, and administrative responsibilities must be raised. Key issues include:

- **Status.** With regard to status issues, research thoroughly. In some instances where the administration claims that nontenured positions hold the same respect as tenured positions, candidates will find that those at the institution without tenure will strenuously deny that assertion. Before accepting a position, regardless of status, candidates should be certain that they understand its implications, not only for themselves, but for the library they will represent and for the profession as a whole.
- **Tenure/continuing appointment standards.** Positions that come with some measure of security will have concomitant requirements for adequate performance. These standards should be closely scrutinized to see if they are achievable and realistic for the candidate. Landing a tenure-track position where there is no chance of obtaining tenure is not an improvement over a non-tenure-track position.
- **Administrative responsibilities.** The director of the law library may be required to participate in law school and university activities, even if these responsibilities are not clearly delineated in written standards.

¶108 Becoming fully informed in advance on these issues does not mean accepting them uncritically. The candidate should be prepared to use the interview process to test the institution's preconceptions and commitment to decisions in these areas. Tactfully stated concerns about, for example, the likelihood of a director's meeting unrealistic tenure standards may lead to a reevaluation of those standards as the interview process continues.

The Interview

¶109 The day(s) of the interview arrive, and the real test begins.¹² On these days, candidates will be tested on a broad body of knowledge and will be targeted with questions from varying perspectives. Further, the sheer volume of questions usually translates into less time to express complex thoughts and opinions. The overall challenge is to demonstrate competence while navigating politically charged waters, and the key to remember is that an offer is ultimately dependent on a faculty vote.

¶110 Unlike typical librarian interviews, a director/faculty interview may require several visits, and each visit may span more than a single day. The inter-

12. See *infra* Appendix: Sample Interview Schedule.

view primarily will be with faculty, though usually at least one meeting with the library is scheduled. Unfortunately, this one slot may not be sufficient to answer the library staff's questions, much less the candidate's. Arranging for follow-up conversations is common and highly recommended. In scheduling, the most commonly excluded group is students. They offer a completely different perspective on the library, one that is important to the candidate's final analysis of the institution. A candidate should be forthright in asking to include all of the players necessary to making a decision; stating reasons for doing so will also educate the institution on the candidate's view of the duties of the position.

¶111 Candidates are evaluated both on formal (e.g., job talk) and informal (e.g., dinner, meet and greets) interactions with the faculty. Those unfamiliar with faculty meet and greets may be more startled by the conversations at the informal gatherings than the questions raised during the formal interview sessions. Due to the nature of the informal interactions, candidates may face "illegal" questions about age, marital status, and the like—questions that most human resource departments urge interviewers to avoid. Although these questions may be off-putting, candidates are urged to take them as they are intended, which is usually not to discriminate, but rather to find out more information about the candidate so that faculty can provide additional helpful information (e.g., best school districts). Of course, if there is no legitimate reason to ask the question, candidates should decline to answer and be frank about the reasoning behind the decision. Let this not be read as advising the candidate to accept inappropriate behavior, but only to approach such questions as charitably as possible.

Job Talk

¶112 The position of director involves a status and a variety of duties different from other librarians, and the interview process will reflect that complexity. Nowhere is this more evident than in the job talk. A formal presentation is always important, but for a faculty position it is paramount. There are more ways to be judged critically in an interview than there are faculty members available to make those judgments, but you will not even reach that stage unless you can present a compelling job talk. Discuss with your contact on the search committee the expectations and logistics of your presentation, and prepare your talk to meet them.

¶113 Know your audience. It will be comprised mostly of faculty, but may also include librarians, students, and administrators. Try to avoid terminology alien to an average faculty member. Your content and tone will depend on the makeup of the audience. You will want to pitch your presentation primarily to the dean and faculty—they are, after all, the group making the hiring decision—but you should also be inclusive. For example, a talk that focuses on the development of collections and services that support scholarly research should at least make note of the importance of the library as a student space, with room for quiet study and group interaction.

¶114 This presentation will be one of the rare occasions when the candidate has the full attention of the faculty. It should be used to educate them, not about the needs of the library, but about their own needs, both present and future. Many of them have very limited expectations and should be better acquainted with the universe of research possibilities available to them. Although the candidate should be wary of falling into library-speak, faculty members will be receptive to an understanding of the theory and methodology behind the service ethic of law librarianship, and will respect the candidate all the more for explaining this foreign territory to them.

Small Group Sessions

¶115 The most significant mistake that a candidate can make during an interview is to agree with everyone, regardless of what position they take. Such agreement will not only create inconsistencies from session to session, but will result in later faculty discussion about the candidate's lack of decision. Disagreeing with a faculty position, even if very strongly felt by the questioner, is acceptable if you can justify it. Every faculty has its cranks, and disagreeing with one of them politely and forthrightly will only improve the overall impression you leave with the majority of less curmudgeonly faculty.

¶116 When demonstrating knowledge or skill, be careful not to denigrate others. Whether the target is faculty, staff, or students, such attacks are unwise and very damaging to a candidate. Even when the charge is arguably true, few interviewers will take the time to delve into the circumstances surrounding the statement. Consequently, the lingering effect is negative, leaving interviewers to believe that the candidate (a) cannot cope well under pressure situations, (b) cannot accept blame, or (c) is disrespectful to co-workers, staff, students. When questions raise such a temptation, the candidate should focus on addressing the issues, not the individuals, thereby demonstrating skill in negotiating and resolving problems.

Meeting with the Dean

¶117 The faculty may hold the controlling vote on tenure status, but the dean decides many of the terms of any offer extended. Therefore, a candidate's meeting with the dean can be crucial in determining what issues may be important in negotiation. A candidate should be prepared to answer questions about administrative skills (e.g., budgeting, long-term planning, personnel management), to phrase answers in a way that highlights future library needs, and to demonstrate how he or she can be an asset to the law school and the university.

¶118 The meeting with the dean is also the candidate's opportunity to assess his or her own fit with the administration. The dean may disclose facts about long-range planning (e.g., not spending funds on improvements, holding onto funds for a new building) that may become relevant to the library. Of particular note should be any references to library spending, awareness of growing library costs, and

space issues. The opportunity is present to assess the dean's willingness to bargain or indulge certain requests or terms (e.g., research leaves).

¶119 The candidate may also be asked about salary requirements. To determine a reasonable salary requirement, one should not only take a look at the most recent AALL Biennial Salary Survey,¹³ but should also contact a director to get a copy of the annual law library director's salary survey, which is compiled independently of AALL, the Association of American Law Schools, and the American Bar Association. In negotiating salaries, candidates should enquire about other perquisites (e.g., subsidized housing). When a law school cannot meet salary demands, such benefits may still make the job attractive.

Post Interview and Negotiation

¶120 The end of the formal interview does not indicate the end of the questioning. Committees may continue their investigation for days or weeks after the interview, contacting references, cold calling faculty or administrators at your current institution, asking you for teaching evaluations, and following up with you on other questions.

¶121 Law schools vary significantly on how they view and approach cold-calling. Candidates who have a legitimate reason to keep their application quiet, at least until the law school shows real interest, should make this clear in the application's cover letter. Otherwise, the committee may cold call people even before any official screening occurs. This can be very awkward for candidates, especially those who have not already disclosed their job searches to their supervisors. That said, advance disclosure to the candidate's direct supervisor before application is *always* strongly recommended.

¶122 If an offer is extended, the negotiation begins in earnest. Before this call is received, a candidate should have already considered both what he or she wants and what areas may be subject to compromise. If certain terms are deal breakers (e.g., tenure-track), candidates should disclose this up front instead of wasting both their time and that of the dean on negotiating other issues. In negotiating for salary, remember that the director's job is a twelve-month job, unlike most other faculty positions.

¶123 Enthusiasm for the position will often lead a candidate into accepting a set of unrealistic goals, as it might seem unattractive to admit to having less than superpowers during the negotiation phase. This will only set the candidate and the institution up for disappointment. This is particularly true of goals with regard to teaching and publication, which can be enormously demanding of the director's time. Suggest a reasonable period for phasing in these demands. The institution will very likely be at its most flexible during the negotiation process, and the can-

13. AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, BIENNIAL SALARY SURVEY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS (7th ed. 2005), available at http://www.aallnet.org/members/pub_salary05.asp.

didate should take advantage of that flexibility. Asking for more time later, after the honeymoon has worn off, will be taken as a sign of failure.

¶124 Finally, the candidate should recognize his or her drop-dead issues and be willing to back away from an unacceptable offer. This is extraordinarily difficult—for most candidates, the psychological Rubicon will long since have been crossed—but in cases where the offer is simply unrealistic or otherwise unacceptable, it must be done. The candidate should explain the reasons for declining the offer and be prepared to deal with a less than pleasant response. It is, of course, possible that the institution will realize that he or she “really means it” and change the terms of its offer, but the candidate should not use this as a ploy. On the other hand, it may educate the institution on the necessity of changing its terms and could, in the long run, do the profession and subsequent candidates a favor.

Conclusion*

¶125 Beyond the strong interest expressed by librarians who wanted to attend this workshop (eighty-four registered within four days for a program held off-site on the last day of the AALL conference), the evaluations completed by the nearly sixty participants were replete with observations about how little of the information that was shared was actually known before the sessions. This suggested the need to publish and to produce programming on these important topics.

¶126 On the basis of feedback to the workshop, some steps have been taken to address these needs. First, a discussion list was created for the workshop faculty and the participants, Future Academic Law Library Directors (falld@aallnet.org). Originally a closed list, it was opened to anyone in spring 2006. At least two programs at the 2006 AALL Annual Meeting in St. Louis dealt with these issues—one on the culture of the academic enterprise and one on the management of law school-wide IT or computing services by the law library director. Several additional programs have been proposed for the 2007 Annual Meeting in New Orleans. In addition, a full discussion of what current directors can do to mentor and work with promising law librarians was held at the meeting of the academic law library directors in St. Louis in July 2006.

¶127 There is certainly more that must be done. Each current academic law library director needs to recognize the urgency of helping to rebuild our profession by taking steps to educate and mentor the law librarians who will follow us. This work will be our legacy to law librarianship, legal education, and the legal profession. But only if we act now.

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Appendix: Sample Interview Schedule

Monday Evening

7:00 p.m. Dinner with three or four faculty members

Tuesday

9:00–9:30 a.m. Tour

9:30–10:00 a.m. Coffee in faculty lounge (“meet and greet”)

10:00–10:30 a.m. Small faculty group

10:30–11:30 a.m. Meet with library staff

11:30–12:00 noon Small faculty group

12:00–12:15 p.m. Break

12:15–1:30 p.m. Lunch and job talk

1:30–2:00 p.m. Meet with student group

2:00–2:30 p.m. Small faculty group

2:30–3:30 p.m. More library time, meeting with administrators, meeting
with main library

3:30–4:00 p.m. Meeting with dean

4:00–4:30 p.m. Wrap up with committee or another “meet and greet”

7:00 p.m. Dinner with three or four faculty members