Fall 2001

Transition to a Liaison Model: Teaching Faculty and Librarian Perceptions

La Loria Konata
Georgia State University, llkonata@gsu.edu

Lyn Thaxton
Georgia State University, lthaxton@gsu.edu

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Georgia State University is a culturally diverse urban institution in downtown Atlanta, with a full-time equivalent enrollment of approximately 15,000. At the heart of this urban and culturally diverse institution is the GSU Pullen Library. The library established a separate collection development department, with several subject bibliographers, in the 1970s. When a new university librarian began work in October 1997, each of the five bibliographers dealt with broad subject areas, such as business and science/health science. The bibliographers worked with departmental faculty representatives, also called book chairs, to determine what was needed in the library. Another group of ten librarians worked as reference librarians and, for the most part, had little contact with the teaching faculty. Faculty requesting books contacted one of the bibliographers instead of a reference librarian. The reference librarians' main duties included working at the reference desk and performing bibliographic instruction when requested; however, relatively few faculty requested instruction classes. The reference and collection development departments operated independently of each other.

The new director, Charlene Hurt, came from an institution, George Mason University, in which the liaison model had been successfully implemented within the reference department, whose size had been more than tripled to accommodate collection development and other liaison functions along with reference work. The liaison model is not a new

concept and was defined by Laurence Miller (1977) as "a formal, structured activity in which professional library staff systematically meet with teaching faculty to discuss stratagems for directly supporting their instructional needs and those of their students . . . . Liaison work can be a part- or full-time activity. In either case it differs fundamentally from the pattern of occasional contacts that have always been made and sometimes initiated by librarians." Ms. Hurt was not initially committed to implementing the liaison model at the Pullen Library because the current model was working and she did not want to change an efficient model; however, her interactions with university administration and teaching faculty suggested the feasibility of this change. Particularly, the university provost believed strongly that the library's strategic plan should be linked directly to that of the university and that the level of funding for the library would be tied directly to this linkage. Implementing the liaison model was done only because it would better reflect the strategic plan of the university.

The significance of the library in the master plan of the university is reflected in several portions of the university's strategic plan. Regarding graduate programs, the plan indicates, "A goal is to continue to build library collections, both paper and electronic, so that the libraries within the university can fulfill their strategic initiatives. Initiatives include partnering with faculty, departments, and interdisciplinary programs to provide a collection in all formats that support graduate programs of excellence and distinction" (Georgia State University, 2000). A section on information technology states, "Library faculty will play a key role in helping students develop skills in evaluation and validity of on-line information" (Georgia State University, 2000). The new director envisioned the liaison mode as more appropriate for the implementation of these strategic initiatives than the model then existing at the Pullen Library.

The following definitions are used in reference to the liaison model:-

- a *subject specialist* has a background in one of the subjects for which there are liaison duties, including collection development;

- a *liaison librarian* may or may not have a subject background but still performs liaison duties, including collection development;

- a *faculty representative/library representative* serves as liaison to a subject specialist or liaison librarian; teaching faculty teach traditional subjects such as English and history.

In November 1997, librarians were asked to submit resumes noting subject expertise. In February 1998, collection-development bibliographers submitted activity reports (lists of funds spent for each department) and preferences for academic departments to retain in anticipation of a reallocation of accounts. With assistance from an outside consultant, the heads of collection development and information services were instrumental in the transition through working together to determine the most appropriate allocation of departmental accounts and which liaisons would be supervised primarily by each of the heads. In addition to collection development and reference librarians, three catalog librarians and the head of access services were assigned liaison duties.

Members of both the collection development and reference departments viewed this transition with considerable trepidation. The reference librarians, working approximately twenty hours at the reference desk each week, believed that the additional responsibilities would be difficult to fit into already hectic schedules. The collection development librarians were concerned that their department would probably be eliminated and were, in some cases, reluctant to take on reference and library instruction duties. Lack of formal training for additional responsibilities was also a concern; however, attempts were made to provide training, particularly for librarians with little experience in a given area.

In the summer of 1998, the process of hiring new librarians to fill specific liaison positions began. The move to a liaison model involved some changes other than revisions in staffing patterns and additions of staff. The Yankee Book Peddler approval plan, which had only included university press publications, was expanded in 1998 to include the output of a number of other publishers that fell within the limits of a profile developed by bibliographers in collaboration with faculty representatives. Certain categories of items, such as textbooks and expensive publications, were not sent on approval but could be selected from slips, available weekly in both electronic and print formats. This change was conceived as important for freeing liaison time for more in-depth interaction with departments, Web page design, instruction, and other functions not strictly related to collection development.

Initially, materials sent as part of the approval plan were charged to particular academic departments. Beginning with fiscal year 1999-2000, allocations have been made according to broad subject categories or clusters. Five clusters of liaison librarians cover the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, education, and business. The cluster model was developed to facilitate communication among liaisons and to assist in selection for areas, such as African-American studies and gerontology, for which there is overlap among departments. The librarians in the clusters interact around the most appropriate budgetary expenditures for serials, electronic databases, expensive reference sets, and, most recently, e-books, which are being purchased with student activity fees.

During the three-year period during which the liaison model has been implemented, former heads of collection development and information services have resigned. The present head of collection development was formerly education bibliographer; a new head of information services was appointed in February 2000. As of December 2000, the Pullen Library employs seventeen liaison librarians to work with academic departments. Two positions remain unfilled with

funding in place and searches underway. Three other liaisons are responsible for the reference collection, government documents and maps, and the library professional collection (work-related materials bought for librarians). Of these, eleven were already employed at the library in the collection development, reference, or catalog departments; the other nine were hired expressly as liaisons. In the selection of new liaisons, a strong emphasis was placed on advanced degrees and professional experience in subject areas. Ms. Hurt was able to obtain funding for new positions approved by persuading the university administration that the liaison model was the best model for implementing the goals of the university strategic plan. To be a success, the model required additional librarians to distribute work evenly.

With the addition of these nine liaisons, weekly hours on the reference desk have been reduced to five to ten per librarian, with an average of approximately seven. A liaison assistant has been hired to work on Web page design and implementation, bibliographic searching, and related activities. Several liaisons also supervise graduate research assistants. Some of the initial concerns about overload have thus been alleviated. The cramped physical space in which the information services department had been housed has also been renovated and now provides attractive, relatively spacious workspaces for liaisons. When our survey was conducted, in December 1999, these changes were not fully implemented; thus, the survey reflects perceptions and attitudes related to middle stages of a major and sometimes chaotic organizational change.

The authors were among the first five liaisons employed. We began work in May 1999, as public administration liaison, and June 1999, as behavioral sciences liaison. Within months, we determined that a process study of the transition could be beneficial to the organization and should include ideas from liaisons, library administrators, and teaching faculty. A review of the literature on

change in academic libraries, along with the evolution of the liaison model, is given below, followed by the methodology, results, and discussion of each of the two aspects of the study. We hope that this research may provide a framework for other librarians attempting to evaluate the personal and professional impact of change during an often turbulent period in library history.

LITERATURE REVIEW

More than thirty years ago, Alvin Toffler coined the term "future shock" in reference to "the shattering stress and disorientation that we induce in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short a time" (1970, p. 4). One major aspect of future shock is the deterioration of individual performance when dealing with sensory overload in a fast, irregularly paced situation. This concept, which resonated with an entire generation for which *Future Shock* became required reading, is even more accurate today as we plunge at warp speed into a new millennium.

Nearly thirty years later, Bertman (1998) delineated the "human cost of speed" in a "hyperculture" in which our major challenge is keeping up with the pace of change, including the flood of information. A hyperculture, according to Bertram, "is easily bored and readily distracted . . .[and] continually demands refueling" (1998, p. 23). To meet such demands, service providers, including those in libraries, may have become "McDonaldized," emphasizing efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control at the expense of creativity (Quinn, 2000).

Although the negative aspects and costs of change have been emphasized by sociologists and other pundits, most library literature of recent decades reflects a positive or neutral stance in delineating the qualities that librarians must possess or develop to survive and even thrive in a constantly altering environment. The necessity for adaptability or "agility" is stressed, with the most effective library

workers described as team-oriented, interdisciplinary, capable of handling role complexity, and comfortable with looser lines of authority (Martin, 1998). Librarians must become adept at multi-tasking and be committed to lifelong learning of complex technical, cognitive, and behavioral skills (Rice-Lively & Racine, 1997).

Specific areas of academic librarianship are confronted with special challenges and transformations. Collection development, over the last decade, has seen a shift toward increasing use of part-time staff and greater integration with other library functions. With the widespread adaptation of the liaison model, the major challenges for collection development are to deal with the potential loss of cohesiveness and to integrate into the overall mission of the institution (Rowley & Black, 1996). No longer focused strictly on collection building, the bibliographer is now involved in collection mapping, the identification of various routes by which information can be obtained (Kohl, 1997). A primary challenge for reference librarians is to become proactive in mastering information technology and teaching information skills and techniques. Flexibility in abandoning outdated attitudes and behavioral patterns is a necessity (Hallman, 1990). Bibliographic or library instruction is no longer a classroom function exclusively but becomes an ongoing function of public service librarians in assisting patrons to edit down seemingly overwhelming amounts of information to develop critical thinking skills (Rettig, 1995).

The assumption is generally made that academic librarians are capable of meeting these challenges and may in fact thrive in a fast-paced environment. Osif and Harwood (1999) commented, "We prepare, prepare, plan and do. We handle it and go on . . . . Possibly this is one of the hallmarks of our profession" (1999, p. 224). Others might disagree with this perception of librarians as generally stoic and persevering. Caputo (1991) discussed several potential causes of librarian burnout, including lack of professional autonomy, negative interactions with the public, role conflicts and ambiguity, decreased

opportunities for personal accomplishment, inadequate positive feedback, lack of control over library operations, and continuously heavy workload.

Among the many changes that have undoubtedly affected academic librarians in the last decade, a major area is the implementation of the liaison model (Davis & Cook, 1996, p. 157). A survey of the literature revealed that many libraries have already implemented such a program. According to Davis and Cook (1996), forty-seven percent of Academic Research Libraries (ARLs) have liaison librarians. Thus, the model that is a new phenomenon at Georgia State University is not entirely new to the field of librarianship. In fact, in 1992, the Reference and Adult Services Division (RASD) of the American Library Association approved "Guidelines for Liaison Work." Since then, many librarians have written articles describing their experiences with the liaison model. In most instances, the major functions of librarians as liaisons are to facilitate better communication with teaching faculty and to integrate them in the activities of collection development. Ryan, Suresh and Zhang stated one of their goals in implementing a liaison model at Kent State University: "to establish contact with the departmental faculty through the library representative and determine how the library could most effectively serve them" (1995, p. 15).

Another goal was "to encourage the library representative to inform the library liaison of curriculum changes and new research interests in their academic units" (Gerstein, 1995, p. 87). Gerstein (1995) described activities that liaisons can use to get faculty assistance, such as keeping teaching faculty informed of budget issues and consulting with them regarding serial cancellations. The liaison model regards faculty input as essential.

The liaison model is also an attempt to foster a partnership between librarians and teaching faculty. The most common description of the partnership has the librarian and teaching faculty "working together, as equals, in creating the class syllabus, the schedule, and the assignments" (Isbell, 1995, p. 52). This partnership also includes liaisons doing library instruction for classes in their subject areas following the development of the research assignment with teaching faculty.

In a survey conducted by Yang (2000) at Texas A&M University, faculty representatives were asked to provide their perceptions and expectations of the liaison model. In most of the literature, it has been librarians espousing their ideas about what the activities of the liaison model should be. In Yang's study, faculty members were asked to rank services that are important to them. Faculty members said that keeping them updated on services available in the library was most important. Next in importance was consulting with them regarding ordering books and serials. The third most important function of the liaison librarian was relaying the opinions and suggestions of faculty to the library administration. Other items that faculty deemed important included "liaisons serving as library resources consultants to graduate students, providing faculty with a current awareness service, demonstrating databases to faculty, having the subject background to serve as a research consultant, offering seminars to faculty on the library's resources, and conducting bibliographic instruction to students (Yang, 2000, p. 126).

In the Texas A&M survey, faculty members stated that the services most important to them had been provided; however, some services were available to them of which they were not aware. Although they stated that bibliographic instruction was extremely important, an alarming thirty-six percent were unaware that this service was available to graduate and undergraduate students. They also did not know that the liaison librarian serves as a research consultant to graduate students, another activity that they ranked as extremely important. When asked if the liaison librarian should have a specialty or subject background for the departments they work with, more than half (57.9 %) did not believe that this was necessary. Overall, faculty members (92%)

supported the liaison librarian model and believed they had a better view of the library and saw an improvement in the library as a result.

LIAISON/ADMINISTRATOR SURVEY: METHODS

The survey of GSU liaisons and administrators was designed as a process evaluation of the middle stages of this organizational change. We have observed that much of the role strain displayed by participating librarians related to a perceived lack of clarity of role expectations on the part of administrators. Thus, our survey focused on the relative importance of various aspects of the job, as viewed by the individual liaisons and as they perceived their supervisors evaluating the job components. We also asked the supervisors to evaluate the job components in terms of relative importance.

The twenty items in the questionnaire were adapted from a delineation of liaisons' professional responsibilities that had been presented to us as part of our job training. The items involved consultation and communication with other liaisons and teaching faculty, development of Web pages, collection management functions such as weeding, formal and informal instruction, assistance in accreditation activities, and assistance in the planning of new courses and programs. Also included were activities not specific to liaison positions but related to the service and research functions of librarians with faculty status: service on committees and in professional organizations and research, either library-related or subject-specific. Certain responsibilities, such as regular work on the reference desk or as a cataloger and weekly review of approval plan books, were not listed because they were viewed as unquestionably an essential aspect of liaisons' responsibilities. Each responsibility was rated on a five-point Likert scale from "Essential to Position" (5) to "Unimportant to Position" (1).

We also developed a questionnaire to determine attitudes toward liaison duties. On the basis of informal interviews with colleagues, we established a list of twelve job aspects that were most likely to be viewed as frustrating and eleven that were most likely to be viewed as rewarding. The frustrating items included such areas as administrative ambiguity and decision-making, division of time among various duties, lack of expertise and training, and insufficient financial compensation for extra duties. Rewarding job aspect items included autonomy, involvement in a new program, variety of tasks, and positive feedback from faculty and students. To compare results for newly hired liaisons to other liaisons recently given liaison duties, we asked respondents to indicate when they had begun employment at the Pullen Library.

LIAISON/ADMINISTRATOR SURVEY: RESULTS

In December 1999 we sent questionnaires to the thirteen librarians who at that point had liaison responsibilities with specific departments. Of these, five had been employed specifically as liaisons within the previous year. Questionnaires rating the importance of liaison responsibilities were also sent to six administrators having a degree of supervisory/administrative responsibility for the liaison program: the university librarian, associate university librarian for public services, associate university librarian for resource management, head of information services, acting head of collection development (who was appointed head in January 2000), and assistant head of information services/reference desk coordinator, to whom a number of liaisons report directly. The acting head of collection development and reference desk coordinator are both liaisons as well as administrators and thus completed questionnaires in both categories. Twelve of the thirteen liaisons and all six administrators returned the questionnaires.

Because of the small size of the population, statistical analysis was limited to comparison of means for the groups and subgroups through

the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) (formerly called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Through these descriptive statistics, we were able to identify the job aspects considered to be most important to liaisons. These, in order of importance, are listed in Table 1. A slightly different pattern is revealed in the aspects considered most important by administrators, also listed in Table 1. A surprising finding was that most job aspects were rated as more important by administrators than they were by liaisons. The mean per item was 3.48 for liaisons, 3.82 for liaisons' perception of administrators' rating, and 3.9 for administrators' actual rating. The job aspects identified as more important by liaisons than administrators were consulting with other liaisons, studying course descriptions and syllabi, weeding the collection, and conducting library-related research.

Table 1. Job Aspects Viewed As Most Important

By Liaisons	By Administrators
1. Consulting with liaisons regularly	1. Teaching classes in library collections and services for assigned subject(s)
2. Regularly communicating with faculty through e-mail	2. Providing in-depth consultations to faculty and students on special projects
3. Assisting in accreditation activities of departments	3. Assisting in accreditation activities of department
4. Teaching classes in library collections and services in assigned subject(s)	4. Consulting with liaisons regularly
5. Providing in-depth consultations to faculty and students on special projects	5. Developing Web pages for themselves as liaisons

Table 2 lists job aspects perceived as most frustrating to liaisons. Less frustrating aspects were not being assigned to the most relevant cluster, lack of subject expertise and training, and serving as an intermediary between university faculty and the library. Additional

frustrating aspects included lack of privacy, frequent interruptions, difficulties in providing accountability to academic departments under the cluster system, and "too many tasks to do them all well." Suggestions for decreasing frustration include the possibility of telecommuting, decreasing the number of meetings, and employing librarians primarily to cover the reference desk to free liaison time for other duties.

The job aspects considered most rewarding to liaisons are also listed in Table 2. Liaisons perceived interactions with other liaisons and the opportunity to work in both reference (or cataloging) and collection development as less rewarding. Write-in comments mentioned one-on-one consultation with students and generally, positive, supportive interactions among librarians as particularly rewarding.

Table 2. Rewarding and Frustrating Job Aspects

Most Rewarding	Most Frustrating
1. Opportunity to work autonomously	1. Difficulty in allocating time to complete major projects
2. Positive feedback from faculty and students	2. Decisions made by administrators
3. Opportunity to be involved in formal and informal education	3. Not compensated financially for increased duties
4. Opportunity to evaluate the collection and enhance its quality	4. Lack of organizational structure
5. Opportunity to promote library services to faculty and students	5. Division of responsibilities between those that are liaison-related & others

Overall, the liaisons identified their jobs as more rewarding than frustrating. The mean per item for frustrating job aspects was 3.2, while the means of rewarding job aspects was 3.98. The seven librarians who had assumed liaison responsibilities had higher scores on frustrating job aspects (per-item mean=3.3) and lower scores on rewarding aspects (per-item mean=3.8) than the five librarians who had been hired specifically as liaisons (per-item means for frustrating items=2.95; per-item mean for rewarding items=4.1).

LIAISON/ADMINISTRATOR SURVEY: DISCUSSION

Although the nature of this exploratory study did not allow for formal hypothesis testing, we had speculated that liaisons would overestimate administrators' rating of various job aspects. This speculation did not prove to be correct. Administrators in fact rated more items as "essential" or "very important" than liaisons assumed they would or than liaisons themselves rated the items. The differences in rating were not large. Most job aspects are obviously perceived as important by both populations. Nevertheless, the overall result is disquieting, given an acknowledged degree of demoralization of librarians juggling a wide array of job responsibilities. Apparently better communication is needed within the system to delineate realistic expectations and set priorities.

Generally, aspects identified as highest priority were similar for liaisons and administrators, though the ranking differed. The administration has stressed the critical importance of interacting with faculty and students, in light of this emphasis in the university's initiatives. Thus, it is not surprising that instruction through classes and individual consultation and involvement in accreditation activities are particularly stressed. Creation of personal Web pages has been viewed as an important public relations strategy by the administration, while some librarians have conveyed that they lack time and expertise to create attractive and usable pages.

We had conjectured that liaisons like ourselves, specifically selected to perform a wide variety of duties, would find more aspects of the job rewarding and fewer aspects frustrating than would established librarians upon whom liaison duties had been imposed. This conjecture was supported. It is likely that newly appointed liaisons have "bought into" the system. As part of the interview process for our jobs, we each gave a presentation regarding our perceptions of the liaison model and our plans for handling the diverse responsibilities. Thus, we were required to think about frustrating and rewarding aspects of the job before accepting the position.

The finding that, overall, liaisons found more aspects of the job rewarding than frustrating was also an expected result. Several librarians who had expressed strong opposition to the liaison model had retired or taken positions elsewhere; thus, the librarians completing the questionnaire have probably accepted the change and were committed to focusing on positive aspects. This result supports the belief that librarians are in general flexible, adaptable, and "agile" rather than the view that they succumb readily to stress in times of transition. The items endorsed as most rewarding, such as autonomy and positive feedback, have been identified as major factors in reducing job-related stress.

Nevertheless, most respondents did identify a number of job aspects as highly frustrating, notably time-management issues, administrative decision-making, ambiguity regarding administrative structure, and lack of compensation for additional responsibilities. It is interesting that interaction with other liaisons was identified as the most important aspect of the job but not one of the most rewarding aspects. Perhaps the cluster system could become more rewarding if certain members of each cluster could become more experts or mentors in certain

areas (such as Web design or instruction), thus obviating the necessity of all liaisons being equally competent in diverse areas.

FACULTY SURVEY: METHODS

While Yang only surveyed the faculty representatives, our survey was distributed to all teaching faculty. The nineteen-item fixed-alternative questionnaire was designed for ease of response and could be completed in less than ten minutes. The questionnaire covered several areas, including:

(1) information about the responding faculty member (length of time at GSU, college, or school affiliation within the university, faculty rank, and tenure status);

(2) evaluation of the library collection;

(3) frequency of use of the library;

(4) requests for library instruction and assistance in development of library assignments;

(5) awareness of departmental liaison;

(6) likelihood of requesting assistance with new databases; and

(7) channels through which library materials are requested.

It was hypothesized that factors such as length of time at the university and faculty rank would affect awareness of the liaison and specific aspects of liaison activities, as well as evaluation of the collection.

There were 1,009 surveys distributed via campus mail. Respondents had the option of returning the surveys by campus mail or going online to answer the survey. Each survey had a number code; those who preferred to respond online had to enter the code. The code was given to ensure that respondents did not respond by both means of communication. This code was also given in anticipation of a follow-up. Fortunately, 347 faculty members responded for a thirty-four percent return rate. It was also determined that approximately two hundred of the questionnaires were sent to administrative faculty,

research assistants, and part-time faculty who are not, strictly speaking, constituents of the liaisons; thus, the return rate for full-time teaching faculty was higher than thirty-four percent. Given these factors, along with the fact that the questionnaire was distributed toward the end of the spring semester, it was decided that a follow-up was not necessary or feasible. Data were analyzed using SPSS.

FACULTY SURVEY: RESULTS

Since the liaison program was still in its infancy, teaching faculty members were asked if they were aware of the program and their liaison librarian. The majority of respondents were in fact aware that they had a liaison librarian. Two hundred and twenty-three indicated they were aware, while 124 were not aware of their liaison librarian. At this point in the development of the model, all departments/schools did not yet have a permanent liaison librarian.


Figure 1. Percent of Faculty in Various Schools Who Knew About Library Liaison Program
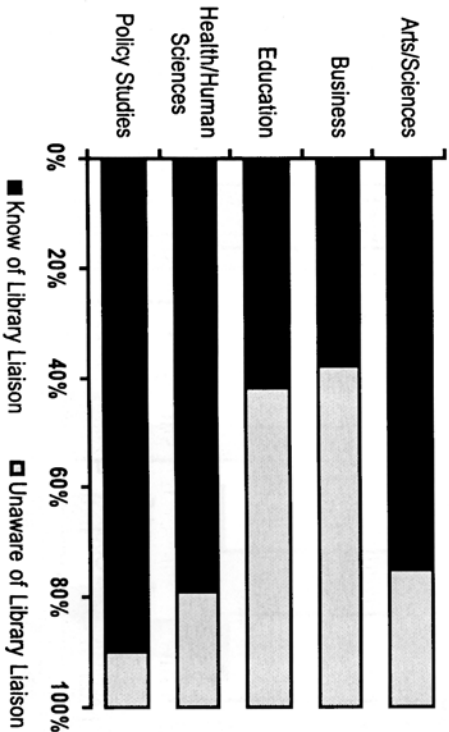
In particular, the colleges of business and education were still without a liaison librarian. These were the two colleges in which the majority was still not aware of the liaison program (Figure 1). In business, twenty-one responded they were aware while thirty-five were not aware of the liaison; similarly, in education, twenty-six were aware while thirty-seven were not.

The answers of the other schools reflected that they had had liaison librarians for at least three months. Based on rank, most of those at the instructor level were not aware of their liaison librarians. At the other levels, the majority of the faculty was aware of their liaison librarian. Based on Chi-Square analysis, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between the amount of time at the university and awareness of their liaison (p=<.05, or accurate at least 95 percent of the time). Similarly, tenured faculty were more likely to be aware of their liaison (p=<.01, or accurate at least 99 percent of the time).

Figure 2 Tenured Faculty Perception of the Overall (Print and Electronic) Collection
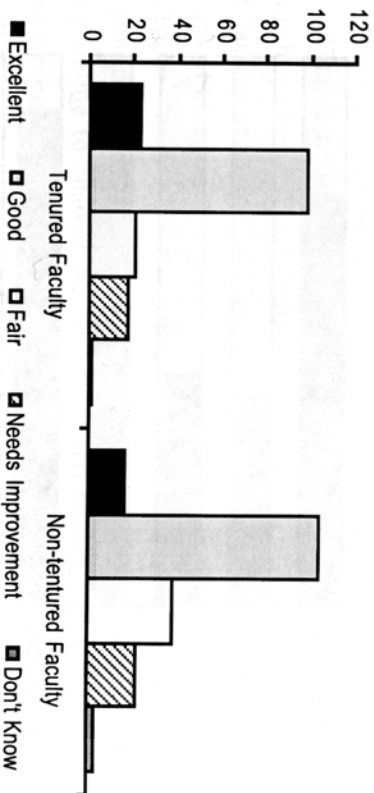
We also asked faculty members how often they used the library. Forty-nine percent use the library at least once a month, while only five

percent said they never use the library. Most of those who never use it are faculty members who have been at GSU five years or less. A number of faculty members who have been at GSU five years or less. A number of faculty members wrote comments on their questionnaires. Several indicated that they were more likely to use another local library, Emory University. One business faculty member commented, "I have never used the library. I maintain my own copies of all the relevant journals and books." An education faculty member candidly remarked, "Lately [I] never [use the library]. I'm intimidated by the technology."

The purpose of the liaison model is to enhance activities such as collection development, bibliographic/library instruction, and overall communication. Faculty members were asked what they thought of the library collection overall in their subject area, and for their opinions concerning the print and electronic collections separately. Concerning the library collection overall, eleven percent thought it was excellent; fifty-nine percent thought it was good; sixteen percent thought it was fair; and eleven percent stated it needs improvement.

Figure 3 Perception of the Overall (Print and Electronic) Collection, by Faculty Rank
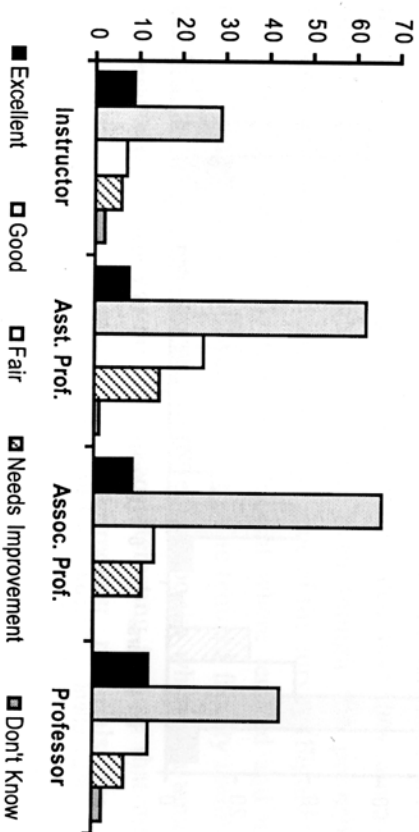
Regarding the print collection, ten percent said it was excellent; fifty-two percent said it was good; twenty-three percent said it was fair; while eleven percent said it needs improvement. For the electronic collection, seventeen percent said it was excellent; fifty-two percent said it was good; thirteen percent said it was fair; while only eight percent said it needs improvement. The majority of both tenured and non-tenured considered the overall collection to be good. This trend followed for the print and electronic collections. The non-tenured faculty were, however, more likely to indicate that the collection needs improvement (Figure 2). The perception of the overall collection by the faculty based on rank followed the general trend. Most viewed it as good, but more assistant professors believe the library to be only fair or needing improvement (Figure 3). This was also the case with the view of the print and electronic collections.

Figure 4 Perception of Overall Collection Based on Faculty's Length of Time at GSU
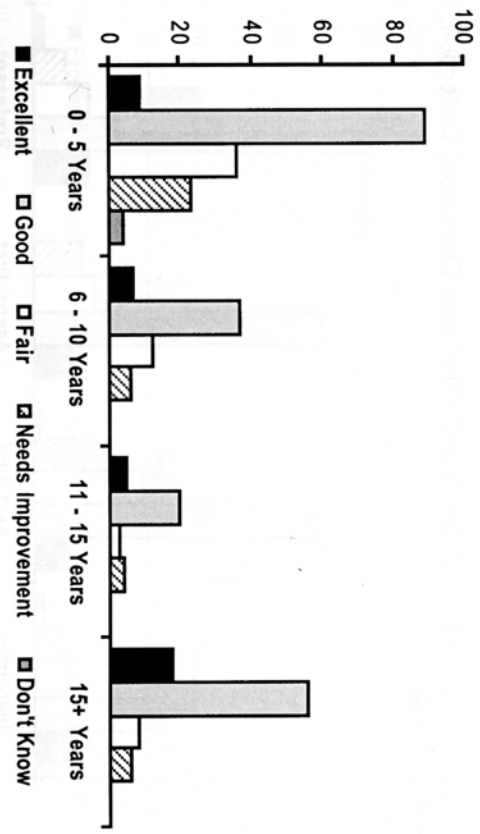
The length of time faculty members have been at an institution can influence how they view the library collection. The numbers were not significantly different between those who have been here five years or less or those who have been here fifteen years or more. Most thought the print, electronic, and overall collections were good (Figure 4). A statistical difference in evaluation of the collection was, however, found between faculty members who were aware of the liaison and those who were not. The former gave the library collection a lower evaluation than the latter (p=<.05).

Another element of collection development is the purchase of books. Faculty members were asked if they suggest books for purchase and how they make this suggestion: through the faculty representative or through the liaison librarian.

Only sixteen percent stated that they never suggested books for purchase. Among those who do, forty-three percent contact their faculty representative, only thirty-three percent contact the library or librarian only, and seven percent contact the faculty representative and librarian. Some difference exists among colleges and schools. Faculty in the colleges of arts and sciences are most likely to request through departmental representatives, while policy studies faculty are as likely to request through a liaison as through a faculty representative. Faculty members from the college of business indicated that they are more likely to request through a librarian, even though the permanent business liaison had not been hired at the time of the survey (Figure 5).

It is the area of collection development where tenured and non-tenured faculty members differ the most. The tenured faculty members contact their library representative to request books while non-tenured faculty members do not request materials for the collection. Half of the instructors request materials by contacting their librarian. The assistant professors are almost evenly divided between those who contact the faculty representative and those who contact the

librarian, whereas the associate professors and professors tend to contact the faculty representative to request materials. A few faculty members opposed the use of an approval plan for books and the integral role of liaison librarians in selection. One stated, "I strongly feel that faculty should have a more direct role in ordering books, videos, journals, etc. We should use our departmental budget rather than leaving it to an outside librarian. We know what we need!"

Figure 5   How Academic Schools Request Materials for the Library
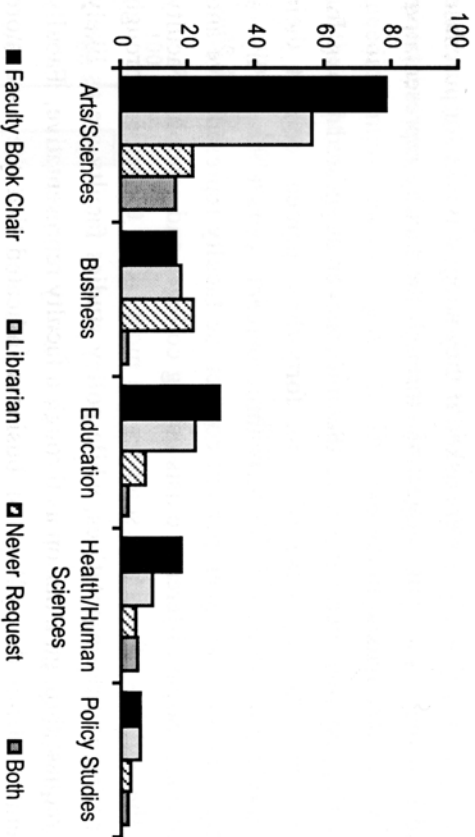
Specialized library instruction is another important function of the liaison model. Faculty members were asked if they have requested a library instruction session for one of their classes. Only 109 faculty members had requested such instruction while 236 had not. Almost all (106) who had requested library instruction found it beneficial. They were then asked if they would request another session in the future, and ninety-eight said they would. Several indicated that they did not request library instruction sessions because they taught primarily

graduate classes where a degree of library expertise was assumed and "research is more self-directed." Those 236 faculty members who had not requested library instruction were asked if they encourage students to attend drop-in library instruction sessions that are available on a first-come, first-served basis. It is interesting to note that 146 faculty members indicated that they do not encourage students to attend these sessions. Several indicated that they were not aware that such classes were available or that they referred students to liaisons' Web sites instead.

The majority of tenured and non-tenured faculty (232) do not ask for library instruction. Of those who do, an overwhelming majority of both categories found them to be beneficial and would ask for another session. Of those who do not ask for library instruction, the majority of non-tenured faculty do not encourage students to seek help on their own time, while tenured faculty are virtually split (55 to 56). Based on rank, there is not a significant difference concerning faculty requesting library instruction. Unfortunately, most do not encourage students to seek library instruction on their own time.

The liaison model should result in better communications between teaching faculty and liaison librarians. Better communication and understanding should enhance this relationship to the point that teaching faculty more readily call upon their liaison librarian, especially in the area of research assistance and developing library projects for their classes. Sixty-six percent stated that they would in fact consult with their liaison librarian in developing research projects. For those thirty-two percent who would not, forty-eight percent said it was not necessary since they are confident that there are enough library materials to support assigned topics. Others indicated that they trusted their ability to develop library-related assignments. Faculty members were also asked if they would contact their liaison if there were a new database that they could not use effectively. An overwhelming ninety percent said they would.

FACULTY SURVEY: DISCUSSION

An encouraging finding of our survey was the fact that the majority of faculty in schools and departments with a liaison were aware of that librarian's existence. It is not particularly surprising that faculty of higher rank and with more time at the institution would be more in touch with communication within the university, including changes in the library's structure and function. The fact that the majority of instructor rank faculty members were not aware of the liaison may reflect the fact that many of those are non-tenure-track faculty who generally do not have permanent offices in the departments and thus would not be likely to come in contact with liaisons.

The generally positive evaluation of the library's collections was another encouraging and somewhat unexpected finding. Assistant professors may give the collection a lower evaluation because of the specialized needs of the research related to their tenure pursuit and because the library cannot and probably should not meet all these needs. An unexpected finding was the comparatively low evaluation of the collection on the part of faculty aware of their liaison. In all probability, interactions with the liaison have led to a heightened and more accurate awareness of the collection, including its deficits.

Knowledge of a liaison's existence does not necessarily translate into interaction in the specific areas of collection development and bibliographic instruction. Tenured faculty are still more likely to make purchase requests through their library representatives, a procedure not necessarily discouraged by liaisons who have close interactions with the representatives. Most faculty members do not request library instruction sessions or refer students to drop-in classes. Some faculty members apparently do not believe these classes are necessary, while others have not been aware of their existence. Admittedly, liaisons would not have time to provide instruction for

each class in their departments but may attempt to target introductory research classes, many of which do not include instruction sessions at this time.

It was encouraging to note that many faculty members would be willing to collaborate with liaisons on class assignments and to ask these librarians for assistance with new databases. This finding indicates that the efforts of liaisons to present themselves as knowledgeable and accessible subject specialists has registered with teaching faculty, even at this early stage in the evolution of the liaison model.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In both faculty and library surveys, a major factor that emerged was the critical importance of communication at every stage of the process. Improved communication between administration and liaisons regarding goals and priorities is necessary; the disparity between the responses of the two groups must be reconciled in order for the liaison model to function optimally. All difficulties with the administrative decision-making process have not been directly addressed at this time; however, the administration has committed to providing additional support staff and working aggressively toward increasing salaries for both librarians and staff. Our presentation of the information we have gathered should be a major step in the process of arriving at a consensus over expectations, improving channels of communication, and helping to bring liaisons' and administrators' perceptions into alignment with reality.

An aspect of the administrators' perception of the liaison role that must be incorporated into the liaisons' view of their roles is the importance of public relations and marketing. In representing the library to the faculty, liaisons should incorporate aspects from the business world, especially marketing. Liaisons must not only market

themselves and the services they provide but also market products provided by the library, including new databases, books, journals, and CD-ROM products. The liaisons should inform faculty members of possible budget cuts that may affect serial subscriptions or other purchases in their subject areas. The liaison is, however, not only a bearer of bad news but must serve as a spokesperson or advocate for the library, always focusing on positive improvements that the library is making for the benefit of the university community.

The liaison model must also foster teamwork among the professors, students, and liaison librarians to be a success. The relationship can be viewed as similar to the offensive unit of a football team. The professor plays the role of the quarterback and gives the students assignments in the same manner that the quarterback gives the plays to the team in the huddle or the ball to the running backs or wide receivers. The liaison librarians are like the offensive line, which determines where the play will go based on the alignment of the defensive team. The obstacles to completing the play successfully are the databases, serials, and monographs available. Because the liaison librarians are the experts in this area, they will know what is available to complete the assignment and will tell the "quarterback" which way to send the play: where to send the students to complete the assignment best. Once the entire team grasps and runs the same play, success will be guaranteed. Students will have a better understanding of their assignments, and professors will have reasonable expectations of their students. An even more advanced stage of teamwork will involve liaisons and faculty members developing the game strategy together as librarians become more integrally involved in collaborating with professors on assignments and team-teaching classes.

Another challenge is to engage the two-thirds of the faculty that did not respond to our questionnaire, those presently not in the game at all. One such effort is an annual faculty authors exhibit and reception, displaying scholarly publications and honoring faculty members who have published during a specific year. This event is co-sponsored by the university librarian and the university president. Because of aggressive marketing and reliance on teambuilding among liaisons, we expect to find a different pattern of priorities, expectations, and interactions when we conduct a follow-up study in two years.

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DR. LYN THAXTON is Behavioral Sciences Liaison, Georgia State University. **LA LORIA KONATA** is Reference and Policy Studies Librarian, Georgia State University.