Establishing a Pre-Tenure Review Program in an Academic Library

Michele Crump, Carol Drum, and Colleen Seale

Whether academic librarians have faculty status varies from one institution to another. At those libraries where faculties have full privileges, librarians either participate in the tenure process or have continuing appointment. The literature of librarianship contains many studies and opinions on both the positive and negative aspects of faculty status and academic librarian tenure processes. Most concur that achieving tenure can be a daunting endeavor for academic librarians. In order to better ensure success, many institutions–the University of Florida (UF) included–have instituted programs to support librarians through the process, such as midterm reviews or mentoring programs.

In 2004, the UF faculty senate appointed a committee to study all aspects of the tenure process. The committee surveyed a sample of peer Association of American Universities (AAU) public institutions about current tenure practices. The public peer institutions, chosen for comparison, were: Georgia Tech University, Ohio State University, Penn State University, Purdue University, Texas A&M University, University of Illinois, University of Iowa, University of Maryland, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, University of North Carolina, University of Texas, University of Virginia, and University of Wisconsin. Only one private institution, Brown University, was included in the sample. After analyzing survey results, the committee submitted a report that outlined various observations and recommendations that would enhance the current tenure system and make it more supportive for faculty. Two relevant criteria state that:

- a tenure midterm review policy should be maintained, and it is recommended that the review be completed by the end of the third year; and
- the junior faculty mentoring program recently initiated should be maintained and given a chance to work.[1]

In all, the faculty senate approved nine recommendations and directed each college to develop and implement these tenure supporting measures.

At UF, the libraries have been designated as a college and the librarians have held tenure appointments for more than eighty years. As a college, the libraries took action to turn the nine recommendations into policy. In the case of a midterm review policy and a junior faculty mentoring program, the libraries appointed a committee that fleshed out the guidelines for implementing these programs. The mid-

term processes are variously named *mid-career, mid-cycle, mid-tenure, mid-term,* and *year-three* in the probationary period. At UF, *midterm* is the preferred expression for the process and the term used in this article to convey the assessment process at a midway point before tenure evaluation occurs. This article will focus on current practices for midterm review and junior faculty mentoring at UF Libraries, and examine tenure review and support practices that other academic libraries have employed.

Literature Review

A review of the professional literature indicates that most published material about acculturating new librarians deals with mentoring in general and, especially in academic librarianship, it has been a fairly commonplace activity.[2] Articles dating back to the 1980s document the mentoring role in fostering professional development and helping untenured librarians successfully navigate through the tenure and promotion process. On the other hand, although tenure and post-tenure procedures are well documented, midterm review in academic libraries has seldom been covered in the published literature. Rather, the authors found supporting documentation of policies and procedures for libraries practicing midterm review only on their Web pages.[3] Whether formal or informal, the following literature shows that mentoring programs offer constructive assistance to junior librarians seeking entry-level or management positions in the academic library environment.

Cubberley contributes a clear appraisal of what the junior librarian might expect from an academic library position in her book *Tenure and Promotion for Academic Librarians.*[4] This excellent guide encourages librarians entering the academic environment by suggesting that they make use of existing support systems to accomplish the tenure goal. Cubberley briefly touches on midterm review, but spends more time advising academic librarians to take advantage of mentor relationships and research release time that will help them manage professional expectations. In order to meet requirements of scholarly productivity,

Michele Crump (mcrump@uflib.ufl.edu) is Interim Director, Technology Services, **Carol Drum** (cdrum@ufl.edu) is Chair, Marston Science Library, and **Colleen Seale** (cwseale@uflib.ufl.edu) is Assistant Chair, Humanities and Social Science Services, University of Florida, Gainesville.

she offers step-by-step guidance through examinations of professional organizations, presentations, poster sessions, displays, and writing for publication. In addition, the book provides examples for forming dossiers that document the librarian's academic achievements and should promote a successful application for promotion and tenure.

In *Mentoring in ARL Libraries,* Wittkopf presents results of an overview of a survey of mentoring programs provided at Association of Research Libraries (ARL) member libraries.[5] The SPEC Kit defines formal mentoring programs as those that pair mentors and mentees, and include goal setting and assessment as part of the program. Of the more than eighty surveys, twenty-one reported offering such formal mentoring programs. Representative documentation from nine of those libraries is included, along with a bibliographic essay on formal mentoring and an annotated bibliography.

Kuyper-Rushing discusses the creation of a formal mentoring program at Louisiana State University (LSU) Libraries to provide "guidance for faculty to achieve reappointment, tenure and promotion and to become better acclimated to academic librarianship."[6] She details the step-by-step process that the libraries used to plan an effective program, including a description of the pre-implementation workshop that fostered progress for instituting this formal peer-mentoring program at LSU Libraries.

Mentoring programs can be formal or informal. By contrast to those mentioned so far, Keyes, Kraemer, and Voelck describe a noteworthy informal mentoring program for untenured librarians established at Oakland University's Kresge Library in their article "Mentoring Untenured Librarians."[7] The paper outlines ten practical recommendations that "can help ensure the success of both the mentoring group and the individual members."[8] The group dynamics involved in the venture appeared to be a key benefit for all the participants, mentor and mentee alike, highlighting the supportive and developmental nature of mentoring programs.

In yet another affirmative paper on the subject, Martorana et al. describe a series of librarians' forums promoted at the University of California-Santa Barbara to explore the value of mentoring in career development.[9] The seven sessions were designed to promote mentoring and explore its role in career assessment, formal review evaluation, professional involvement, and professional contributions. Session evaluations confirmed that the sessions were useful in introducing mentoring to staff at all levels and instilled in the library staff an ideology from which it could build a culture of mentoring throughout the library organization.

Munde takes the connection between mentoring and institutional culture a step further, advocating an organizational approach that can rejuvenate library staff and possibly reinvent the organizational structure of the library.[10] In this context, the author discusses the aging of the profession and how vacancies will appear in leadership roles due to retirements at library administrative levels. She urges libraries to seize this evolving opportunity to change and restructure organizations. In order to achieve goals in forwarding future library leadership, the focus for renewal must engage more than just junior librarians. Indeed, mentoring must groom all library employees for career advancement, as well as encourage technical skill development on all library levels.

Another aspect of the mentoring process for tenure-accruing librarians involves helping them to become active researchers. A paper by Lee describes a program at Mississippi State University, where the libraries have a standing research committee that provides "an active research support program" and sponsors programs on research issues, such as the editorial review process, research resources, evaluation of research articles, and how to choose appropriate topics.[11] Although useful for all library faculty, the committee is geared toward—and provide excellent support for—librarians new to academe. The libraries also maintain a Web page that highlights papers published by library faculty. A project under consideration is the development of a research packet to be given to new faculty upon hire.

Finally, Mosley offers specific advice on how best to mentor the next generation of library leaders, the Generation X'ers, in a paper published in *Library Administration & Management.*[12] There, she presents an argument that this ethnically diverse group, born between 1961 and 1981, is different from other generational groups (both before and after) in its personal values, career goals and expectations, and approach to organizational culture. Characteristics of this generation include independence and self-sufficiency, a need for work to be fun (not routine), a tendency to complete work in bursts of activity, and a low tolerance for what is perceived to be cumbersome bureaucracy and hypocrisy. Mentoring this age group requires flexibility; goal setting; adaptive communication styles; positive reinforcement; and constructive, appropriately timed feedback. Mosley warns that management jobs may lack appeal to Gen-X librarians, and that, once hired, they may be difficult to retain unless generational differences are taken into consideration when trying to support them in new administrative roles.

Research Method

Using the same peer institutions identified by the faculty senate committee, the authors gathered information about midterm review and mentoring practices at the libraries of the AAU institutions, as published on their Web sites. In addition, the authors sent a brief anecdotal questionnaire to select library discussion lists to solicit tenure practices from other academic institutions, not limited to AAU institutions.

The anecdotal survey sent to discussion lists asked the following three questions:

1. Do you have a third-year review prior to tenure or continuing appointment?
2. Do you have a mentoring program that supports the review process?
3. Would you be willing to share documentation on these programs?

Thirty-two institutions responded to the posting. Modeled after the structure of the original UF study, the data were compiled in three tables: appendix A summarizes the responses of the thirty-two institutions that replied to the discussion list survey; appendix B applies data from the UF survey to highlight AAU peer institutions' practices with regard to tenure and mentoring programs; and appendix C pulls data from appendixes A and B to identify those libraries that have formal midterm reviews for tenure and continuing appointment, *and* have established formal mentoring programs to support librarians' progress toward midterm assessment.

Appendix A indicates that out of the thirty-two libraries responding to the survey, all but one have tenure policies or continuing appointment processes in place. Twenty-six of the libraries perform midterm reviews in support of the tenure process, five libraries reported that they do not perform midterm reviews, and one offers the review as an optional practice. The timeframes for the midterm review vary according to the established evaluation procedures. Twenty-two of the libraries perform a midterm review at the end of three years. Four of the libraries use the review as an advancement or contract-renewal opportunity; however, if librarians do not meet the criteria for promotion, they will not be retained. Only eleven libraries have formal mentoring programs in place for junior librarians. Many of the libraries indicated that mentoring takes place on an informal basis, either during the annual evaluation or through a collegial or supervisor relationship.

Appendix B reviews the data gathered in the UF survey of selected AAU institutions by compiling details of the library evaluation and mentoring practices. The Web sites of fifteen institutions confirmed that the libraries maintain a tenure or continuing or academic appointment system. Twelve of the fifteen have established a review process that functions as a midterm evaluation. Similar to the results recorded in appendix A, pre-tenure reviews occur at various times according to established library evaluation procedures. Reviews occur annually for two libraries, and for nine of the libraries they take place after two, three, or four years of service. Seven libraries offer their junior librarians tenure support through a formal mentoring program. As in appendix A, informal mentoring appears to be a practice at various career levels before tenure or continuing appointment. In this regard, mentoring is offered on an as needed basis, rather than as an established practice that requires the participation of every entry-level librarian.

Finally, appendix C brings together data from appendixes A and B on the twelve libraries that perform midterm review and offer formal mentoring programs for junior librarians. The twelve libraries represented in this table implicitly view mentoring as a preparatory element for librarian career development. In these libraries, mentoring programs can be regarded as necessary parts of a collegial environment and instrumental in successful achievement of tenure. Along with feedback provided by the midterm evaluation, that supportive relationship serves as a tool for promoting future success.

Practices at the George A. Smathers Libraries

At UF Libraries, all persons holding salaried appointments as librarians are assigned a faculty rank; most are appointed to the tenure track. Following university guidelines, the Libraries' Career Development Handbook (www.uflib.ufl.edu/pers/facultyeval/cdh.html) provides procedures for annual performance evaluation as well as tenure and promotion (T&P) including: timelines, deadlines, sample letters, and guidelines for the T&P committee. In addition, there are two post-tenure reviews: the Sustained Performance Evaluation Program (SPE) and the Salary Performance Program (SPP). SPE's purpose is to monitor continued professional growth and development and to determine if a tenured faculty member's performance remains satisfactory. SPP is a monetary award for faculty who have achieved their highest promotional rank—that is, full professor or university librarian—and who continue to excel in their professional responsibilities.

As previously noted, UF implemented a three-year midterm review for all faculty members in 2004. The libraries have always conducted annual reviews for library faculty, and in recent years a tenure support group was formed to nurture junior librarians through the tenure process. In compliance with university policy, a committee was charged to develop the libraries' midterm review procedures for its faculty and produce guidelines that, once approved by faculty librarians, would be documented in the handbook.

The midterm review is intended to assist faculty in evaluating progress toward tenure halfway through the probationary period and takes place at the end of the third year of service. The review is a means for ensuring that junior librarians are making satisfactory progress toward tenure and promotion. It provides a commentary on the readiness of the library faculty member for tenure and is intended to be a mentoring aide, not a disciplinary tool. The packet for each library faculty member will contain a current vita and the following documentation for the three years under review: chair/assistant chair letter of transmittal; tenure/promotion form; annual assignments, including goals; annual activity reports; and annual evaluations.

Tenured faculty in the candidate's department will review all documentation and discuss the candidate's progress toward tenure. The results of the departmental discussion are reflected in the chair or assistant chair's letter. Next, the currently appointed T&P committee reviews all documentation and discusses the candidate's progress toward tenure. The T&P committee is responsible for meeting with the candidate to discuss its findings and provide a written summary of these to the candidate, the department chair/supervisor, and the appropriate division director. Finally, a copy of the midterm review packet is added to the library faculty member's personnel file in the libraries' human resources office. However, it does not become part of the candidates' tenure packet and does not go forward for further review outside the libraries.

In addition to the review procedure, UF also supports tenure candidates through a mandated formal mentoring program. The mentoring program developed by the libraries was implemented in 2003, with the specific goal of assisting untenured library faculty to achieve success with tenure and promotion. In 2004 the mentoring program was formalized and integrated with the midterm review procedures. The mentoring process is designed to begin from the first day of employment through the completion of the midterm review. The librarian's direct supervisor and department chair select the mentor for the junior librarian from among the tenured library faculty. Workshops on the mentorship program are offered for both mentors and mentees. Mentors, mentees, and supervisors are encouraged to evaluate the relationship at the end of the junior librarian's first year, and, if appropriate, a new mentor may be assigned.

In fall 2006, UF Libraries began the second full year of its mentoring program. At that time, eighteen librarians were participating as mentors and sixteen junior librarians were assigned mentors. These numbers are expected to increase in the coming years as junior librarians replace retiring library faculty (at least ten retirements are expected during the next two years). The midterm review and mentoring program results provide meaningful feedback for the entry-level librarian, pointing out areas that might need attention during the next four years. The libraries' administration also uses these two support systems as assessment tools. The official mentor relationship ends with the completion of midterm review at the end of the third year of employment. However, it is hoped that the collegial relationship formed during this time remains genuine throughout the junior librarian's tenure progress.

Summary

An examination of published library literature indicates that although tenure and post-tenure review procedures are well documented, little exists for librarians undertaking a formal pre-tenure review process. However, the addition of midterm career review with mentoring programs appears to be a growing trend. The authors' informal survey offered a snapshot of current practices for nurturing junior librarians through the tenure process within the academic librarian profession. This process provides formal feedback well before application for tenure or continuing appointment takes place. In addition, formal and informal mentoring programs cultivate support and a collegial environment in which junior librarians should thrive.

Most institutions conducting midterm reviews reported having the following commonalities:

- The purpose of the review is for assessing progress toward tenure and promotion as well as providing mentoring.
- Reviews generally occur after three years of service.
- Most reviews are mandatory for progress in the tenure track.
- Most include written procedures.
- Most faculty is evaluated on established tenure and promotion criteria.
- Required documentation includes: vita, position description, activity report, some require references, supporting documentation, and a tenure promotion plan.
- Most complete the process with a recommended plan of action for achieving tenure and promotion.

The success or failure of these practices can only be evaluated in time. Thus, the authors plan a future study to follow-up with several junior librarians after they have completed the midterm review and mentoring programs.

With the graying of the profession, success of junior librarians will be increasingly important for providing continuity of services. Academic librarianship will need managers and leaders to fill the vacant administrative roles left behind by these senior librarians. Several authors have voiced concern about the developing leadership gap that may increase as senior librarians retire from the profession. Senior librarians in mentor roles can help to nurture management and administrative skills in junior librarians. Supporting junior librarians toward achieving tenure and promotion and preparing them for future leadership positions needs to be a commitment by both libraries and library professional organizations.

References

1. James Klausner et al., "Report of the Faculty Senate ad hoc Joint Committee on Tenure," University of Florida (Oct. 19, 2004), www.senate.ufl.edu/reports/tenure/20041019tenureReport .pdf (accessed Apr. 15, 2005).
2. Cary, Shannon, "Faculty Rank, Status, and Tenure for Librarians: Current Trends," *College & Research Libraries News* 62, no. 5 (May 2001): 510–20.
3. For example, see Indiana University Libraries, "Library Faculty Handbook: Mid-Tenure Review for Librarians, Mid-

Tenure Review Form and Mid-Tenure Review Checklist," www.libraries.inb.edu/intranet/data/policy/Compiled%20 Faculty%20Handbook.pdf, 49–52 (accessed June 21, 2007).

4. Carol W. Cubberley, *Tenure and Promotion for Academic Librarians: A Guidebook with Advice and Vignettes* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 1996).

5. Barbara Wittkopf, *Mentoring in ARL Libraries, SPEC Kit 239* (Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, 1999).

6. Lois Kuyper-Rushing, "A Formal Mentoring Program in a University Library: Components of a Successful Experiment," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 27 (Nov. 2001): 440.

7. Dana Keyes, Elizabeth W. Kraemer, and Julie Voelck, "Mentoring Untenured Librarians," *College & Research Libraries News* 64 (June 2003): 378–80.

8. Ibid., 379.

9. Janet Martorana et al., "A Focus on Mentorship in Career Development," *Library Administration & Management* 18, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 198–202.

10. Gail Munde, "Beyond Mentoring: Toward the Rejuvenation of Academic Libraries," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 26 (May 2000): 171–75.

11. Deborah Lee, "Mentoring the Untenured Librarian," *College & Research Libraries News* 66, no. 10 (Nov. 2005): 711–24.

12. Anne Mosley, "Mentoring Gen X Managers: Tomorrow's Library Leadership Is Already Here," *Library Administration & Management* 19, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 185–92.

Appendix A. Discussion Lists Survey Results

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY	TENURE POLICY	MIDTERM REVIEW	MIDTERM REVIEW TIME	MENTOR PROGRAM
Appalachian State University	Y	N	N/A	N (informal)
Arizona State University	Y (academic appointment)	Y	3	Y
Auburn University Montgomery	Y	Y	3	N
Bowling Green State University	Y	Y	3 (annual reviews)	N (informal)
Brigham Young University	Y (continuing appointment)	Y	3	Y (first-year formal)
Case Western Reserve University	N	N	N/A	N
College of Charleston	Y	Y	3	N (informal)
Cornell University	Y (faculty non-tenure)	Y	3 (move up or move out)	Y (semi-formal)
Eastern Connecticut State University	Y	Y	third-year renewal contract	Y
Indiana University	Y	Y (optional)	3	Y
Indiana State University	Y	Y	annual reviews	N (informal)
Ohio State University	Y	Y	4	N
Oklahoma City University	Y	N	annual reviews only	Y (university wide)
Rutgers	Y	Y	3	N (informal)
San Francisco State University	Y	Y	third-year retention	N (informal)
SUNY Buffalo	Y	Y	3	N (informal)
Texas A&M University	Y	Y	3	N (tenure support group)
Trinity University	Y	Y	2 and 4 formal review	N
University of Akron	Y	Y (retention reviews)	year review w/ benchmarks	Y
University of Chicago	Y (continuing appointment)	Y (promotion process)	3	N (annual review)
University of Houston	Y (continuing appointment)	Y	3	N
University of Idaho	Y	Y	3	N (annual review)
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	Y	Y	3	N (annual review)
University of Michigan	Y (academic appointment)	Y (part of review)	annual	N
University of Minnesota	Y (continuing appointment)	Y	3 and 4	Y
University of Missouri (Columbia)	Y	Y	must promote after 3 years	N
University of New Hampshire	Y	Y	3 (complete review third year)	N
University of Pittsburgh	Y	Y	3	Y
University of Tennessee	Y	Y	3	Y
Utah State University	Y	N	annual reviews	N
Walla Walla College	Y	N	N/A	N (informal)
York College	Y	Y	3	Y

Appendix B. Peer Institutions Tenure/Review Policies

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY	TENURE POLICY	MIDTERM REVIEW	MIDTERM REVIEW TIME	MENTOR PROGRAM
Brown University	Y	Y	2	Y
Georgia Tech University	Y	Y	3	N
Ohio State University	Y	Y	4	N
Penn State University	Y	Y	2 and 4	Y
Purdue University	Y	N	N/A	N
Texas A&M University	Y	N	N	N
University of Illinois	Y	Y	3	N
University of Iowa	Y	Y	3	N
University of Maryland	Y	Y	1 and 2 or 3	Y
University of Michigan	Y (academic appointment)	Y	annual	N
University of Minnesota	Y (continuing appointment)	Y	3 and 4	Y
University of North Carolina	Y	Y	3	N
University of Texas	Y	N	N/A	Y
University of Virginia	Y	Y	anytime during year 1–6	Y
University of Wisconsin	Y	Y	annual	Y

Appendix C. Peer Libraries with Formal Midterm Review *and* Mentor Programs

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY	TENURE POLICY	MIDTERM REVIEW	MIDTERM REVIEW TIME	MENTOR PROGRAM
Arizona State University	Y (continuing appointment)	Y	3	Y
Brigham Young University	Y	Y	3	Y
Brown University	Y	Y	2	Y
Cornell University	Y (faculty non-tenure)	Y	3	Y
Eastern Connecticut State University	Y	Y	3	Y
Penn State University	Y	Y	2 and 4	Y
University of Akron	Y	Y	annual	Y
University of Indiana	Y	Y	3	Y
University of Maryland	Y	Y	1 and 2 or 3	Y
University of Minnesota	Y (continuing appointment)	Y	3 and 4	Y
University of Pittsburgh	Y	Y	3	Y
University of Tennessee	Y	Y	3	Y