

## Managing Multiple Campus Libraries (Or How to Form a Support Group with your Colleagues)

Matthew J. Wayman, Amy Deuink, Jennie Levine Knies, and Bonnie Imler

### Abstract

In the past five years, the Penn State University Libraries have adopted a dual-management style in several locations, assigning one head librarian to multiple campuses. The success of these arrangements is context-specific and contains benefits for the individual and the organization, as well as some drawbacks. This article discusses situations in which librarians manage multiple locations in both interim and permanent capacities and offers perspectives based on the authors' experiences.

### Introduction

It is not unusual for individuals within an organization to work on multiple teams, nor is it unusual for a manager to supervise different groups of people (Berger and Bruch 2021). The Pennsylvania State University Libraries (PSUL) are a geographically dispersed system of more than twenty campus libraries that are centrally managed at the highest level of administration. While the dean of University Libraries and Scholarly Communications and most of the senior administration are located at Penn State's University Park campus, the associate dean for Commonwealth Campus Libraries (CCLs) is based at a Commonwealth campus and routinely travels around Pennsylvania. Traditionally, each of the twenty CCLs was staffed in a consistent way, with a head librarian present at every campus for local management. In the past five years, PSUL has adopted a dual-management style in several locations, assigning one head librarian to multiple campuses.

This article details the successes of these arrangements, which are context-specific and contain benefits for the individual and the organization, as well as some drawbacks. As libraries' budgets shrink and reductions in staffing are more common, middle managers may find themselves serving in multiple roles. This may apply to oversight of day-to-day operations in

multiple units within one building or across several different locations. During times of change or uncertainty, the interim appointment of known leaders with existing knowledge of “how things work” within the system can provide some salary cost savings and flexibility in the wake of vacancies, as well as grounding for employees in the unit.

## Literature Review

The authors recognize that Penn State’s centralized-but-distributed multi-campus system is an outlier in higher education. Few other academic institutions have similar organizational structures. Finding literature relevant to our libraries is, therefore, challenging. Managers who supervise multiple sites may simply be too busy to write about their experiences. There are, however, sources that provide perspectives that touch on either managing multiple locations or serving as interim leaders at new sites.

Working multiple jobs is never easy. Managing more than one library can feel exactly like that. In “How to Manage Multiple Locations,” Foltz, Miller, and Wilson (2012) write about the distributed feed and grain business, but the article has many appropriate connections. The authors correctly note that each location can have its own culture and that teams must be built with this in mind. The chain of command should be clear and communication open. Managers must ensure that no sites are neglected and should delegate tasks.

Literature on the management of multiple academic units includes some other common themes. Hammond (2012) notes that in the management of multiple school libraries, all units should be treated equally. Hours should be openly communicated, and managers should recognize they can’t do everything, thus reinforcing that delegation is crucial. In “Strategies for Managing and Leading an Academic Staff in Multiple Countries,” Hughes (2011) notes that a positive relationship with Human Resources can help a manager understand the terms of employment. While employees should understand the mission and expectations of the home campus, distributed locations may not have the same philosophies. This latter point hits very close to home at Penn State, where there are significant differences between the University Park campus and the smaller campus locations.

Forms of communication are more diverse since Bottorff et al. (2008) studied communication and collaboration across multi-campus institutions, with more reliance on integrated tools like Microsoft Teams, Google Workplace, or Slack, which offer constant contact through chat, voice or video call, and screen sharing. Demographics and generational preferences for communication are also shifting, potentially dividing the workplace between those who always want to be online and those who do not, at least in the absence of workplace

expectations (Lindzon 2024). In a study of the literature on modern academic library leadership, Ashiq et al. (2021) found that effective communication, collaboration, and social skills are most critical for library leaders. When managing multiple locations, the ability to be flexible within these skill sets or even to unite multiple units is especially valuable.

Situations in which leaders manage multiple locations often include internal interim appointments. Rubin and Ohlsson (2020) found that the three most common uses for interim managers were to prepare for the permanent manager, to solve a problem or make tough decisions in times of crisis, or to handle transition and change management (see also Dźwigoł 2020; Mooney, Semadeni, and Kesner 2012; Woods et al. 2020). Perhaps there are no available seasoned managers to appoint permanently, or perhaps a younger or less experienced colleague wishes to obtain more leadership experience. In interim situations, Irwin and deVries (2019) note that important themes include clarification of roles, the establishment of supportive relationships, and constant learning experiences. Hoffman and Barker (2022) elaborate on this concept, noting that interim appointments that become permanent can have a cascading effect on other positions within the organization, something that we experience at Penn State. While their research encompassed a variety of library types, including public libraries, Hoffman and Barker (2022) also note that in academic libraries, interim appointments are often both longer in duration and more common. Farrell (2016) provides a useful guide for potential interim library leaders and adds that “the lessons gained may be more than what the individual anticipated,” as it is unlikely one can anticipate all the requirements of the new role (996).

An individual’s success in these situations depends on several factors—many of which have already been noted—including their own personality and leadership characteristics. One study about multiple team management (MTM) and role strain indicated that a person’s level of emotional exhaustion from the management of multiple teams depends at least partially on their polychronic orientation, or the extent to which they can juggle multiple tasks at the same time (Berger and Bruch 2021). While these appointments can therefore benefit both the individual and the institution, the process can also prove costly in some ways.

## Benefits

### Personal and Professional Benefits

The most obvious and tangible personal benefit to assuming a role that involves managing multiple locations is the potential for increased compensation, although it should be noted that this does not translate to double salary and is often in the form of an increase ranging from 5%

to 20%. It also may provide managers with workplace flexibility—perhaps one location is a shorter commute than another, for example. Opportunities to spend more time on personally enjoyable work or explore new challenges may also lead to improved job satisfaction.

There are more abstract personal benefits to a dual-management role, one of which is the opportunity to learn more about one's own management style. It is very easy to consider oneself an excellent manager when supervising familiar and easygoing employees. However, assuming another location adds a layer of complexity and is not too different from starting an entirely new job at a new organization. Managers may gain confidence and solidify their desire to continue in management (Hoffman and Barker 2022).

Taking on a new managerial role also provides exposure to a new location or campus and allows for the establishment of new relationships and new perspectives that may prove valuable in both the present and the future. Adding some variety to the daily routine can help to energize employees. The opportunity to simply do something different in a new place may curb feelings of stagnancy. New relationships with colleagues may also help in the exchange of ideas and can lead to projects and opportunities.

Professional benefits generally fall into three categories: growing leadership and management experience, growing one's professional network, or finding new venues to apply skills and knowledge. All offer the opportunity for career exploration if that is how the manager chooses to frame it. However, approaching the situation with a growth mindset is just one option. Determining whether the role is interim or permanent will help frame the exploration of personal and professional benefits and costs, as well as the starting approach.

### [Interim vs. Permanent Approach](#)

Where to start in a new location and the issues (if any) being addressed will depend on the needs of the organization and whether this is an interim, interim-to-permanent, or permanent appointment. It is no different from starting any new job, but with the advantage of already knowing the overarching organizational structure and culture. There may also be some pre-existing, hopefully positive, relationships between the new manager and team members. However, new managers should use caution when making assumptions about a new workplace and instead take the time to get to know people and the local culture.

In permanent or likely permanent situations, building connections with stakeholders outside the library is just as important as building relationships with the new team. Interim appointments are a temporary juggling act. In these situations, the scope will likely be limited, and the focus of the interim role should be clear. However, in permanent appointments, managers will have to

find a new balance as the scope and focus of the new role are explored. Either way, managers should lean into their talents as leaders.

Whether temporary or permanent, how could the role benefit someone professionally? There are several ways to take advantage of the opportunity to grow skills and experience, or it may be a new way to apply existing expertise.

#### Opportunity for Greater Responsibility and Wider Managerial Experience

The professional benefits of accepting a dual-management role include the opportunity for greater responsibility and the development of leadership and management skills. An interim role can be a low-stakes way to try out a new role, a trial period for both manager and employer to evaluate performance and whether the split leadership role is a viable approach. More experienced managers can practice adapting their leadership style to suit the new environment's needs.

#### Opportunity to Lead New and Different Projects

Managing multiple campus libraries may also be an opportunity to lead new and different projects. Perhaps there are assessment needs to inform the next steps, opportunities to do outreach and refresh the image of the library, or a long-overdue project to reframe a space or collection in the library. Tackling a project versus simply managing to maintain the status quo would almost certainly require a more significant time commitment.

#### Opportunity to Learn About New Disciplines and Academic Programs

Taking on a role at a new campus could provide the challenge of learning about different disciplines and academic programs or even make use of experience that is underutilized in the manager's current role. For example, as a generalist most recently working with social sciences and technology fields, managing a second campus library allowed one author to grow relationships with faculty and students in health fields, as well as extend relationships in social sciences programs shared across the campuses.

#### More Use of the Range of Expertise

Taking on responsibility for an added location can also provide more opportunities to use the full range of existing knowledge and expertise. This might be especially true when a manager has grown in their current position, or its scope is narrower than their range of expertise. Or perhaps a manager is ready to embark on a new initiative, but their primary location is not. A second location, however, might be willing to try the new approach. The authors find that the closer relationships and smaller campus populations are great places to quickly implement and test new ideas that might later be scaled across the university.

Whether interim or permanent, the manager should consider how their current position will be reframed in context, and whether any expectations or responsibilities might be suspended, altered, or reassigned. Regardless of whether and how responsibilities are reframed, the manager's time and the physical (or digital) presence as a team member are limited in supply. Unless the groups share a space, a manager divided will likely be less visible than both teams are accustomed to.

## Organizational Benefits

Benefits to the organization may be the most tangible and more obvious than benefits to the individual. These benefits generally fall into five categories: cost savings, transparency and resource sharing, new perspectives, communication and collaboration, and an easy transition.

### Cost Savings

Joint appointments provide numerous benefits to an organization, the most obvious being the potential to save money by paying less in salaries and benefits. By assigning a manager to an additional location, the organization also eliminates the need for training on the various complex systems and bureaucratic procedures. These cost savings, however, are not the primary benefit, and they may not actually be as advantageous as one might think. Often, organizations will compensate for dual-management positions with salary stipends and the hiring of additional support staff or librarians to compensate for tasks the manager no longer has time to perform.

There is, of course, some additional cost savings associated with appointing a current employee to an additional role rather than conducting a search to fill an open position. The search process for a new librarian has both financial costs and takes time away from the employees involved. Searches can have travel costs associated with on-site interviews and fees for posting positions via sites with wide exposure. Participating in search committees or being otherwise involved in the interview process means time taken away from other tasks. Reviewing candidate materials, conducting phone or remote preliminary interviews, and holding final round interviews with candidates can take considerable time. These costs are not easily measured.

Besides saving costs by not conducting a search, appointing a manager already working within the organization allows for the appointment of a known leader. Administration therefore can choose someone they know can take on the new role or provide an opportunity to an employee seeking managerial experience. The institution can effectively choose to further develop a seasoned manager or allow a developing employee to grow their own career. Opportunities such as these are often helpful in achieving further promotion and advancement within the organization or in new positions elsewhere. These experiences can be difficult to

achieve, particularly during times in which many institutions are seeking to streamline their organizational structures and reduce salary costs.

While some organizations will create joint appointments through an internal search or selection process, PSUL tends to fill these roles as part of a reorganization, either planned and intentional or initially as an interim appointment in response to a departure. In the latter situation, the organization saves the time and expense associated with a national search for a manager and gains time in reevaluating needs at a specific location. In 2023, the PSUL administration created guidelines for interim appointments to help make the process more equitable and consistent across the organization.

### Increased Transparency and Resource Sharing

A manager of multiple locations is uniquely situated to improve communication and collaboration across an organization. Although it is easier than ever to share information across departments, branches, or campuses via email and other virtual means, there are many situations in which people may not know what to ask or may not think that there is anything to ask, especially when it comes to procedures and workflows. One very simple example involves one author's implementation of a process to proactively acquire and manage course reserves at two campuses. One campus was depending on faculty self-identification of course materials and, as a result, had a reserve collection that was small and not useful to students. Another had developed a method to scan the university bookstore listings and create a tracking spreadsheet of all course materials for the campus in a given semester. They could then identify high-use classes and prioritize purchase of the reserve materials that would have the largest impact on students. They also worked to share information with faculty about the circulation and impact of those reserve materials.

Sharing managers across locations also increases transparency across an organization. The ability to track operating budgets or wage budgets at different locations can be eye-opening, and rather than lead to a situation where everyone asks for increases, it can also become apparent that one location may have discovered efficiencies where another had not. Further, inequities can more easily be revealed when one location has access to resources that another does not. When such disparities are recognized, given intimate knowledge of both local needs and budgets, they can more easily be remedied. For example, if one location has equipment such as better scanners, 3D printers, or Makerspace tools that another lacks but are common throughout the institution, they can easily be implemented with existing knowledge and expertise.

### Increased Communication and Collaboration

Another possible benefit of multi-campus leadership is improved communication and collaboration among staff within the units. When regularly combining unit meetings is reasonable, the manager can convey information to everyone at once, and fruitful discussions may lead to efficiencies or exciting new initiatives. Particularly when one or both units are small, this provides more opportunity for close connection with others in peer positions. In other cases, one unit might benefit from the unique expertise of the other. For example, when working in small units, staff may have no local peers, and each person plays a unique role in the unit's functions. Actively building relationships between these peers can create increased communication and collaboration around their specific duties. Closer collaboration between the units can also translate to potential cost savings and more sharing or trading of resources, such as generic or themed event supplies or the exploration of new technology while testing its use and demand. However, coordinating even more schedules across units to arrange dates and times when more people are available can prove challenging.

### New Perspectives

Sharing a manager across multiple locations can also provide a new perspective on workplace climate and culture that is grounded in the context of the university and reveals problems or helps to determine the roots of ongoing issues. If a problem persists or worsens under new management, administration can assume that management is not the underlying cause. Not only does this help resolve issues, but having a new manager also provides the opportunity for new perspectives and innovative approaches.

Through a trickle-down effect, a manager taking on additional responsibilities at another location can open doors for other employees within the units to take on more significant roles. Those employees may experience some of the same personal and professional benefits. This benefits the organization by diversifying skills across the unit through a form of cross-training. For example, a manager cannot be in two locations at once. There will likely be leadership or knowledge gaps regarding normal library operations that must be addressed, such as management of disruptions, responding quickly to facilities issues, or leadership in emergency situations. A potential pitfall to avoid is rewarding good work with more work and expecting others within the unit to take on new responsibilities with no adjustments to their schedules and job descriptions. Higher administration must ensure that those taking on more responsibilities are recognized for their work, particularly if they are not also awarded interim roles that offer additional compensation.

## Easy Transition

In some cases, interim managers are chosen because of their institutional knowledge. Years of experience working for their university can ease the transition process for both the manager and staff at their newly assigned campus. Familiarity with existing procedures helps facilitate workflows and provides a more seamless adjustment. Staff benefit from knowing that the new manager, whether temporary or permanent, does not require much onboarding, at least in terms of learning about the larger organization. For those who enjoy mentoring, additional management responsibilities also provide an opportunity to assist more employees in meeting their own professional goals. Servant leaders may be well-suited to managing multiple locations. Defined by Laub (1999) as “leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader,” servant leadership promotes sharing power for the common good, authenticity, community building, and valuing and developing people (81). Furthermore, Washington, Sutton, and Feild (2006) found that empathy, integrity, competency, and agreeableness are characteristics of servant leaders.

## Drawbacks/Disadvantages/Challenges/Concerns

Despite the benefits to the institution and the individual, these transitions are never easy. Change brings many challenges for all involved. Taking on a new assignment is challenging for the manager, while staff must also adapt to a new personality and new preferences for how things are done. For the manager, workload, responsibility, priorities, and work-life balance change.

### Personal Drawbacks

In some cases, taking on an additional location comes with an interim phase, which can be a trial run for a permanent placement. That phase can serve to gauge compatibility between the manager and employees and can also give some indication if the logistical part of the job (e.g., workload, travel) is going to be manageable in the long run. An interim position can have a well-defined term limit or can be open-ended without a termination date in place. The unending interim position, or one with a continuing series of ending dates, can lead to the manager feeling underappreciated and a bit used, with job expectations outreaching the minimum pay increase for a “temporary” position.

An interim manager may be reluctant to enforce needed changes out of fear of pushback from employees or higher administration. There is also little incentive to implement new, big-picture projects or new policies that may not be continued once their term is up. Likewise, staff

may prefer not to modify their practices if they believe things will reset after the interim period ends. The interim position can be much like that of a substitute teacher who is trying to maintain some order and the status quo while having their boundaries continually tested by students. For the interim placeholder who desires the permanent role, they may even be counseled not to make any drastic changes that may be unpopular and work against them in the hiring process for the permanent leader.

### *Personal and Professional Costs of Becoming a “Nomad”*

The physical travel between campuses and the division of time between locations can lead to a more “nomadic” work life. Managing and balancing time are major considerations and potential disadvantages to overseeing multiple campus libraries. When contractually negotiating an interim or permanent position that requires significant travel, it is important to detail expectations on compensation for mileage/vehicle use and the inclusion of travel time as part of the workday. It may be possible to balance increased travel time and workload with some work-from-home days. This makes a manager more equitably available to both teams but does reduce visibility in the library and around campus. Technology has allowed supervisors to be readily available to employees regardless of location, and the internet and cloud storage allow access to documents when and where needed. It also allows virtual meeting attendance at one location while being physically present at another.

Maintaining one physical library building can be challenging, but managing two means additional budgets, work orders, and policies. Cleaning, leaks, collection development, seating, and space issues are just a few of the areas that will require time, attention, follow-up, and usually paperwork. While this may have been possible to administer at one location, it may require delegation to other library employees to keep track of these details at more than one location.

Taking on an additional location also means added responsibility for managing more employees. This will likely mean more “I am sick/My child is sick/I have an appointment” texts and emails first thing in the morning and more approvals for vacation time. Annual evaluation meetings and paperwork will also increase. Truly getting away for vacation time becomes harder, and schedules must be available and communicated to all locations.

The additional administrative duties involving employees, the physical library building, and local politics can leave little time for research or service. This can be especially difficult if these are job requirements or needed to achieve tenure. Burnout at work may also bleed into personal life, and there may be a need to cut back or eliminate tasks requiring other personal time such as community service and outreach, hobbies, and even family time. Sacrificing these activities

can affect a person's social life and well-being. It can also take a toll on personal relationships. Relationship building and maintenance are crucial to obtaining work-life balance.

In one author's experience, one location's occasional use of Slack or Microsoft Teams chat became the default during the pandemic remote work era and continued in earnest after everyone returned to campus. However, another library's staff was still struggling to develop a culture of daily informal communication. The head librarian and staff at both locations knew each other's preferred methods of communication, and the head librarian was always available during emergencies.

As with many employees in the present-day workforce, as a nomad and remote worker (and a manager of multiple locations will always be remote to at least part of the team), most or all work will be accessible virtually from anywhere or easily portable. Much has been said about the work-life balance of remote workers, but it requires persistence to maintain physical and digital availability. It can also be more difficult for the nomadic and remote worker to leave work at the workplace at the end of the day. Discipline and effective communication both up and down the chain are required to keep work from bleeding into personal life.

### Organizational Drawbacks

While the many benefits to an organization of joint appointments have been described, there are also several drawbacks to consider. When the manager of multiple locations leaves, whether planned or not, the vacancy is felt at two locations. In addition, the pool of qualified people willing to take on these locations in an interim capacity may be diminished due to the collapse of duties and increased responsibilities required among other employees.

### Capacity

As managers add more responsibilities to their primary job duties, they may have less time for service opportunities like serving on committees or participating in shared governance. As institutions of higher education continue to reduce hiring due to shrinking budgets, there are simply fewer people available to fill vital roles. Guidelines regarding the number of people expected to serve on various library committees, for example, may date from a time when the organization was more generously staffed, and finding enough librarians of a certain rank or amount of experience in an organization may become increasingly difficult and become the impetus for broader organizational change.

### Cost

While having one manager cover multiple locations may seem to be a cost-saving measure, it is not free of budget considerations. As mentioned, managers should not agree to take on these assignments without additional compensation. Paying 5% or 10% of someone's salary is still

less costly than hiring a second manager; however, these situations are often implemented to make room in the budget for more frontline staff. A dual-management situation may only be feasible if the organization agrees to hire another full-time instruction librarian or an additional full-time staff member to manage daily building operations. It may also require salary stipends and adjustments for the employees who must take on additional responsibility. If the organization envisions these dual-location arrangements as permanent changes in the approach to staffing, then reconceiving some support and administrative positions to encompass more responsibility from the outset would be useful. For example, at Penn State, during a recent multi-year project by Human Resources to modernize and update staffing classification, PSUL requested that a profile for a “Library Operations Supervisor” be created. This is a non-librarian staff position common throughout the CCLs that created the ability to assign more duties and compensation to a position that could carry a great deal of responsibility for managing a library building or space, but not necessarily managing people.

### Visibility

When a manager takes on a second location, they will necessarily be less visible at either location than if they were devoted to only one place. Depending on the nature of the assignment, one location may be “primary” and one “secondary.” One location may have fewer day-to-day needs than another. The context may change depending on the time of year or fluctuating staffing levels at a location. No matter how well a person plans to be present at significant meetings or events in one location, there are likely to be conflicts. Partners and collaborators may perceive that the manager is unavailable simply because they are not in their office every day. Employees who are used to more immediate responses to questions may feel frustrated if they must wait longer for answers to their questions.

### Domino Effect

At Penn State, the administration developed guidelines for creating interim appointments to be more systematic, equitable, and mindful in solving temporary staffing issues. However, many permanent joint appointments have arisen out of interim situations, and the capacity issues mentioned previously are very apparent when anyone in the organization leaves due to retirement or another opportunity or takes a temporary leave of absence, such as family and medical leave or a sabbatical. The effects of these absences can reverberate in both directions. If a dual manager retires or leaves for another opportunity, then the organization will have to decide whether it continues to make sense for the two locations to be united under one manager. While evaluating the necessity and effectiveness of any vacant position is good

management practice, in the short term, the reality is that instead of one location to worry about, there are two.

These situations can also add complexity to reporting structures. At Penn State, the CCLs are located on three distinct types of campuses: one graduate-only campus, five standalone colleges that tend to have larger library buildings and staffing, and fourteen University College campuses that may have only three or four employees in total. In the current organizational chart, the five standalone college libraries report to the associate dean for CCLs, while the University College campuses and the graduate campus report up through one of two regional directors (also head librarians), who themselves report to the associate dean. The head librarian at one of the standalone colleges is also a dual head of one of the University College libraries, meaning that there is an exception that is complicated to explain when describing the organizational chart.

### [Adapting and Adjusting to Different Library and Campus Cultures](#)

Adjusting to a different library culture, even within the same organization, takes time and effort. Observation is key. While the library is new to the newly appointed manager, it has been functioning with people and processes already in place. Taking time to observe the office workflow, employee interactions, and the overall culture of the library will be a benefit in the long run.

Managing more than one library requires the ability to multitask and juggle many competing priorities. Library staff may have different communication methods, prefer different management styles, fill different roles on their campuses, and even have different group dynamics. It is important not to show favoritism and to value each library's abilities and strengths. In addition, it is important to refrain from comparison whenever possible. There will be occasions when the balance of time spent physically in one location will be greater than in others. Just a few examples include times of low staffing, medical leaves, search committee interviews, annual evaluations, and new employee training.

Communication is key, and with limited physical time in each library, it is necessary that the library director be available by phone, email, and/or text. An increase in the number of employees to supervise brings additional sick leave requests and family emergencies that require immediate attention. In addition to correspondence from personnel, the dissemination of vital institutional information is also essential. This is where it is helpful that the manager understands the library's communication preferences. A topic that may be shared with one

library as a group email may be better taken at either a virtual or an in-person staff meeting with another.

The library's workplace atmosphere and team dynamics require observation and historical reference to understand. Team dynamics may be the most complicated thing for a new leader to figure out, but they affect the library's social atmosphere and daily operations. The eating habits of the employees can be telling. Does everyone eat separately at their desk or communally in a breakroom? Do they ever order restaurant food as a combined order? Do any of the employees socialize outside of work? Are there cliques? Are birthdays and holidays celebrated or ignored? These social norms can differ greatly between locations, and differences should be respected.

External to the library are the overall campus structure and local politics. Once again, observation is key in early meetings and during introductions with other campus personnel. Determining the library's status and value to the campus community can assist in knowing how best to approach financial, space, and scheduling conversations with the administration. Campus cultures can also differ in collaborations with different departments or annual library-sponsored events.

## Conclusion

At present, budgets are uncertain at many academic institutions. For example, the University of Wisconsin announced the closure of its Waukesha campus, which is set to take place after the spring 2025 semester (Gretzinger 2024). At the time of writing, Penn State itself is going through some significant organizational changes, driven by budget constraints, that directly affect the Commonwealth campuses. A voluntary separation initiative in late spring 2024 resulted in a significant decrease in staff across the organization, and the university is in the process of centralizing functions such as business and finance, as well as combining multiple campuses under individual chancellors. Penn State currently has five head librarians who supervise multiple campus libraries. For the most part, PSUL's shared campuses mirror the recent regionalization efforts to share campus chancellors. In May 2025, Penn State announced the closure of seven Commonwealth Campuses scheduled for spring 2027. Of those seven libraries, four are managed by a head librarian with responsibilities at another campus. While there are many challenges faced by these impending campus closures, and people will most certainly leave the institution or lose their jobs, this distributed system has somewhat lessened the impact of loss at the head librarian level.

We hope this article will help to reveal the benefits and pitfalls institutions are likely to encounter if they find pursuing this model in their best interest, and that readers find the advice

provided applicable to librarians granted responsibilities beyond their original portfolios, whether via interim appointments or permanent promotions.

This article was written from several managers' perspectives. An area of future study would be to explore this type of situation from the perspectives of employees and constituents. Gathering this kind of data would require a level of care. Designing assessment tools to gather data should take into consideration confidentiality, and a study would likely be more useful if conducted across many institutions. The authors' observations indicate that staff working under managers of multiple campuses may feel resigned to the situation. Providing open and transparent information about budget and staffing situations may contribute to understanding. A stable and consistent shared, experienced manager is preferable to the frequent turnover of newly appointed managers.

The reward for a job well done is another job, or in some cases, an interim appointment that becomes permanent. With present situations in mind, these scenarios are more likely to happen in the future. Academic library administrations need to be prepared for more of these joint positions. However, both institutions and individuals should proceed with caution and understand the risks and benefits involved.

## References

- Ashiq, Murtaza, Shafiq Ur Rehman, Muhammad Safdar, and Haider Ali. 2021. "Academic Library Leadership in the Dawn of the New Millennium: A Systematic Literature Review." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 47, no. 3: 102355. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2021.102355>.
- Berger, Stefan, and Heike Bruch. 2021. "Role Strain and Role Accumulation Across Multiple Teams: The Moderating Role of Employees' Polychronic Orientation." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 42, no. 7: 835–50. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2521>.
- Bottorff, Tim, Robbin Glaser, Andrew Todd, and Barbara Alderman. 2008. "Branching Out: Communication and Collaboration Among Librarians at Multi-Campus Institutions." *Journal of Library Administration* 48, nos. 3–4: 329–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930820802289391>.
- Dźwigoł, H. 2020. "Interim Management as a New Approach to the Company Management." *Review of Business and Economics Studies* 8, no. 1: 20–26. <https://doi.org/10.26794/2308-944X-2020-8-1-20-26>.
- Farrell, Maggie. 2016. "Interim Leadership." *Journal of Library Administration* 56, no. 8: 990–1000. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2016.1231547>.

- Foltz, John, Jim Miller, and Christine Wilson. 2012. "How to Manage Multiple Locations." *Feed & Grain* 51, no. 2: 46, 48, 50–52.
- Gretzinger, Erin. 2024. "Wisconsin's Warning for Higher Ed." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 9. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/wisconsins-warning-for-higher-ed>.
- Hammond, Heidi. 2012. "Survive and Thrive: Managing Multiple Libraries." *Library Media Connection* 31, no. 3: 28–29.
- Hoffman, Ashley T., and Amy E. G. Barker. 2022. "The Impact of the Interim Leadership Experience on Library Middle Managers." *Journal of Library Administration* 62, no. 7: 863–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2022.2117952>.
- Hughes, Rebecca. 2011. "Strategies for Managing and Leading an Academic Staff in Multiple Countries." *New Directions for Higher Education* 2011, no. 155: 19–28. <https://doi.org/10.1002/he.441>.
- Irwin, Kathy M., and Susann deVries. 2019. "Experiences of Academic Librarians Serving as Interim Library Leaders." *College & Research Libraries* 80, no. 2: 238–59. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.80.2.238>.
- Laub, James Alan. 1999. "Assessing the Servant Organization: Development of the Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment (SOLA) Instrument." PhD diss., Florida Atlantic University, 1999. ProQuest (9921922). <https://www.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/304517144/abstract/2379EA71C6344E98PQ/4>.
- Lindzon, Jared. 2024. "The Slack Generation Can't Communicate with the Email Generation. Why More Platforms Are Dividing the Workplace." *Fast Company*, February 11. <https://www.fastcompany.com/91026349/the-slack-generation-cant-communicate-with-the-email-generation-why-more-platforms-are-dividing-the-workplace>.
- Mooney, Christine H., Matthew Semadeni, and Idalene F. Kesner. 2012. "Six Ways Companies Use Interim CEOs." *Organizational Dynamics* 41, no. 1: 13–22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2011.12.003>.
- Rubin, Viktoria, and Jon Ohlsson. 2022. "The Interim Manager—a Catalyst for Organizational Learning?." *The Learning Organization* 29, no. 4: 377–91. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TLO-11-2021-0133>.
- Washington, Rynetta R., Charlotte D. Sutton, and Hubert S. Feild. 2006. "Individual Differences in Servant Leadership: The Roles of Values and Personality." *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 27, no. 8: 700–16. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730610709309>.
- Woods, Stephen A., Nick Diprose, Mary Murphy-Diprose, and Geoff Thomas. 2020. "Effective Interim Leadership and Management: Development of a Cyclical Model of Interim

Assignments." *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness* 7, no. 2: 173–90.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JOEPP-10-2019-0094>.

**Matthew J. Wayman** ([mjw13@psu.edu](mailto:mjw13@psu.edu)) is Head Librarian, Penn State Berks, and Interim Director of Commonwealth Campus Libraries Eastern Region, Penn State University.  
**Amy Deuink** ([ald120@psu.edu](mailto:ald120@psu.edu)) is Head Librarian, Penn State Beaver and Penn State Shenango. **Jennie Levine Knies** ([jak6029@psu.edu](mailto:jak6029@psu.edu)) is Associate Dean for Commonwealth Campus Libraries, Penn State University. **Bonnie Imler** ([bbi1@psu.edu](mailto:bbi1@psu.edu)) is Head Librarian, Penn State Altoona and Penn State DuBois.

**Published:** November 2025