

April 28, 1969

REPORT ON THE STATUS OF LIBRARIANS

Summary of Recommendations

The University Library Committee recommends that:

1. Professional librarians be accorded full faculty status;
2. A special committee be established to formulate principles and procedures for determining faculty rank of librarians and to revise where necessary the language of the Faculty Handbook to reflect the proposed change.

Terms of Reference

A study of the status of librarians in Indiana University was included in the University Library Committee's terms of reference specified in the May 1968 report of the Byrnes committee and adopted by the Faculty Council. The report provided (para. 12):

That the numbers and quality of the library staff must continue to rise rapidly. In particular, the status, prestige, position in the University, and salaries of the professional staff must advance significantly. Professional or academic employees should be considered members of the faculty. They should be encouraged to devote every third summer to research and to improve their skills, applying for these opportunities as faculty members do for sabbaticals.

It is not quite clear that the Byrnes Committee was hereby specifically recommending that professional librarians be accorded full faculty status; it is even less clear that the Faculty Council adopted the Committee's report with the understanding that it was



so recommending. Arguments for either of these positions can be made but, since the matter is important enough to warrant detailed discussion, the University Library Committee in making its recommendations to the Faculty Council has decided to treat the topic de novo.

During the current academic year an ad hoc committee of professional librarians was formed which studied the matter at length and concluded that librarians should have full faculty status. This committee met with individual members of the University Library Committee and was invited to several of its sessions. The members of the ad hoc committee also prepared reports on various aspects of the problem (the development of faculty status for librarians, role of the librarian in the modern university, a profile of the librarians at Indiana University, the application of the criteria for faculty rank to librarians). The comments and reports of the ad hoc committee of librarians were of great help to the University Library Committee.

#### Earlier Consideration of the Matter

The most recent official study of the topic at hand at I. U. was conducted in 1950, when a committee, appointed by the Faculty Council and chaired by Professor Edward H. Buehrig, reported on a "request of professional librarians for faculty status." The committee recommended that professional librarians be placed under the administrative control of the Dean of Faculties, that they be made eligible for participation in the TIAA retirement plan, they be granted parking privileges and be included in faculty mailing lists. Its recommendations were accepted by the Faculty Council and largely implemented by the University so that in these respects



librarians are today in a position quite similar to, although not fully identical with, that of faculty members. The 1950 committee, however, rejected the suggestion that librarians should be given full faculty status, chiefly on the ground "that academic title should be accorded only to individuals doing teaching and/or research as a part of their regularly constituted duties." The committee explained that it had "proceeded on the principle that different professions should have separate identities," and that, while recognizing "the close association between the functions of the librarian and those of the teacher," it felt that "to lump both together is illogical and confusing." For these reasons it recommended that the Faculty Council not act favorably on the librarians' request with respect to sabbatical leaves, academic tenure and equality of salaries, pointing out, with respect to the first two, that "the suppositions of research and academic freedom which respectively underlie these practices do not seem to be applicable to the profession of librarian," and with respect to the last, that "there is no convenient or satisfactory basis for equating salaries in the absence of academic title for librarians and also the twelve-months contract under which librarians are employed is a factor which makes comparison difficult." The Faculty Council accepted the recommendations of the committee.

#### Consequences of the Change in Status

Admission of professional librarians to faculty status entails a number of consequences or "benefits". These may be conveniently listed as follows:

- (a) Prestige and dignity of the academic title;
- (b) Participation in university governance, including voting for and membership in the Faculty Council, membership in university committees and other bodies, etc.;



- (c) Application of strict academic criteria for promotion in rank;
- (d) Eligibility for conferral of tenure, when meeting the appropriate academic standards;
- (e) Eligibility for sabbatical leave for research and study;
- (f) Inclusion in various plans and benefits available to faculty (retirement, parking, etc.).

The benefits in category (f) appear to be already substantially granted to librarians at I. U., so that the change in status entails no serious budgetary consequences in this respect. Of the other benefits, only the eligibility for sabbatical leave might raise minor budgetary problems. The Library administration expects the expenditure for sabbaticals in the next few years to amount to no more than twenty to thirty thousand dollars (\$20,000 - \$30,000) per year. All in all, no serious budgetary problems appear to arise.

#### The Case Against Faculty Status

The report of the 1950 Buehrig Committee was quoted at some length above because it states succinctly and accurately the argumentation against conferral of faculty status. It may be too blunt but not unfair to say that the argument essentially involves a denial of sufficient similarity between librarians and faculty members in a university, on the related grounds that, first, librarians are not involved in teaching, and second, their work is not in itself scholarly but is rather a species of skilled clerical work. The conclusion drawn from this basic dissimilarity is that there is neither need nor justification for granting to librarians the specific kind of treatment granted to faculty members.



### The Case for Faculty Status

It is not necessary to consider the validity of such arguments in the past. Whatever the situation at the time the 1950 committee presented its report to the Faculty Council, the university, the university atmosphere and the function and attitudes of librarians have evolved considerably since then.

Today, the basic argument in favor of full faculty status is that librarians are and should be professional scholars and therefore should be recognized and treated as such. Their work is essentially scholarly in nature, more nearly comparable to the work of faculty members than to that of administrators or clerical personnel.

That the function and position of librarians are not identical to those of the traditional liberal arts teacher seems evident on its face. It should be remembered, however, that the present-day university includes a variety of departments and faculties the function and position of the members of which differ considerably from those of the traditional liberal arts teacher. Possession of academic graduate degrees, particularly the Ph.D., is not required in several schools, professional or near-professional in character: Music, Fine Arts, Law, Optometry, Medicine. The distinction between teaching and research is not always easy to make in some of the natural sciences. Involvement in social service to a given "clientele" is part of the university training in medicine, social service and other disciplines, including now law.

Although many librarians are engaged in regular or occasional teaching, more or less in the traditional manner, it is their role within the library that justifies principally their academic status. The university library is an integral part of the university; discovery of the library and utilization of its resources are essential learning



experiences for students, undergraduate and graduate. Today's curriculum tends increasingly toward reliance on independent study; it is not therefore an exaggeration to say that for many purposes the teaching function is transferred from the classroom to the library. As specialists in research methods and procedures, librarians are thus involved in the teaching process within the university as intimately as other faculty members.

It follows that librarians are as much in need of protection for the free expression of their ideas and opinions as any other faculty member. Differences of opinion among librarians, as among other faculty members, often reflect differing conceptions of their task and their scholarly subject matter. To the extent, therefore, that the various perquisites of faculty status are designed to protect academic freedom, librarians need that status as much as the other members of the university community.

With respect to the other accepted facets of a faculty member's activity, comparison is much easier. Librarians engage in research and publication, essentially similar to that of teaching faculty members. Research activities within the library extend from bibliographic research to substantive research on particular subjects to the production and interpretation of one of the finest research tools in existence, the library catalog. Mastery of scholarly methods, familiarity with foreign languages, and in-depth knowledge of subject fields are required of any good librarian; it may be said, indeed, that because of continued demands from all sides librarians are required to remain up to date in their disciplines and constantly to practice their scholarship more than many faculty members.



With respect to the third facet of a faculty member's activity, professional service, the position of librarians is indistinguishable from that of other faculty members. Librarians are called upon to participate in professional activities relating to library research and study as well as to specific subject disciplines. Librarians have considerably enhanced the reputation of many institutions through their professional pursuits, which include presentation of papers at professional meetings, consultations within or outside the university, publication of scholarly work, etc.

Another important, although by itself not controlling, argument in favor of full faculty status for librarians is the existence today in American universities of a definite trend toward recognition of faculty status. This trend has gained such momentum over several decades that currently those institutions which do not provide such status are at a marked disadvantage in recruiting and retaining well-qualified librarians. Over half of the colleges and universities in the country have granted full faculty status or its equivalent to their professional librarians. The Midwest has pioneered in such recognition. Illinois and Ohio State have accorded full status and rank to professional librarians. Minnesota and Wisconsin are divided, with over half of their librarians holding faculty status and rank and the other under civil service. Michigan State and Iowa have accorded faculty status with equivalent ranks. In Indiana itself, Purdue, Indiana State and Ball State provide full faculty status and rank to their professional librarians.

All the above considerations militate in favor of the present proposal. The possible argument that, once faculty status is extended to librarians, other groups will seek similar status, is in no way



persuasive. The accepted tests for faculty status remain valid and are not weakened by recognition of the fact that librarians do meet them. Any other group claiming faculty status will have to make its case, as the librarians have done, and will be judged on its own merits. It is both inaccurate and unfair to compare the rational processes of faculty action in such matters to the mechanical operation of floodgates which, once opened, cannot be closed.

#### The Responsibilities of Faculty Status

In proposing this change of status for professional librarians, the University Library Committee perceives it as involving both recognition of the present role of librarians in the university and encouragement and inducement for further development of librarians along these lines. While it is useful to consider faculty status in terms of its privileges and benefits, the responsibilities that it entails are more important. These include, a professional scholarly attitude; participation in academic decisions through service on university committees, councils and other bodies; active participation in professional—campus, regional and national—organizations; engaging in research and publication; in sum, a commitment and dedication to the educational process within the university. Clearly, librarians have already assumed several of these responsibilities; the change in status would encourage them to do so with even greater zeal and would thereby greatly promote the interests of the university community.

It is thus misleading to consider the proposed conferral of faculty status as a mere benefit magnanimously to be granted by the university to the librarians. In terms of conditions of employment,



indeed, it is doubtful that they would gain by such a change in status; sabbaticals would be available to them, but they would now be subject to strict academic criteria for promotions in rank and salary increases and to the potentially harsh consequences of tenure decisions. The Committee's proposals therefore should be understood and judged with reference to the interest and benefit of the university and the university community.

#### Implementation of the Change in Status

In conferring faculty status upon librarians universities have generally chosen between two courses of action. Some universities have granted full faculty status, with academic rank and titles identical to those of other faculty members (instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, professor). Others have formally recognized librarians as members of the faculty but have devised corresponding equivalent ranks and titles (e.g., assistant librarian, senior assistant librarian, associate librarian, librarian). In the Committee's opinion, no useful purpose would be served by such differentiation in title. Establishment of a cumbersome parallel hierarchy of titles can only be defended on the ground of significant need and no need has been shown to exist. Insistence on semantic differentiation may even be seen as contradicting the very equality of academic status which this proposal seeks to establish. The purpose of the proposed change in status is to signify the academic role of the librarian as scholar and as valuable member of the university faculty. Since the normal title for faculty members is the professorial one, the Committee recommends that the librarians' ranks and titles should be identical to those of other faculty members.



Implementation of the proposed change in status will require amendment of the Faculty Handbook, whenever it expresses differentiation between faculty members and librarians. In some cases, for instance, with respect to promotion and tenure and the criteria therefor, no actual change in the language now used may be necessary, but the existing understanding as to its interpretation (e.g., as to external evidence of performance) will have to be made to fit the situation of librarians. The ad hoc committee of librarians has formulated certain valuable suggestions in this respect; their report entitled "Application of Faculty Status to Librarians," is appended.

More difficult problems may arise with respect to the assignment of faculty rank and titles to the persons already serving at the Indiana University Library. The Committee is anxious that their interests be respected in all regards and that the change in status not have any adverse effects on them.

The University Library Committee recommends therefore that a special committee be established to guide and supervise the process of implementation of status change. Reflecting the interests involved, this committee should be composed of persons representing the administration, the faculty at large and the professional librarians. Its task will be temporary in character and will have been discharged when the move of librarians to full faculty status will have been completed.

#### Recommendations

The University Library Committee recommends that:

1. Professional librarians be accorded full faculty status effective September 1, 1969;



2. A special committee be established, composed of three (3) administrative officials (including members of the library administration), appointed by the Dean of Faculties, three (3) professional librarians, elected by the university's professional librarians, and three (3) non-library faculty members, elected by the Faculty Council, (a) to formulate principles and procedures for determining the faculty rank of individual librarians and (b) to revise where necessary the language of the Faculty Handbook (on promotion and tenure, retirement plans, and other matters) to reflect the proposed change in the librarians' status.

Submitted by the University Library Committee

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