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Contingent Appointments in Academic Libraries: Management Challenges and Opportunities

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Contingent Appointments in Academic Libraries: Management Challenges and Opportunities

Abstract

Purpose: Academia's overwhelming reliance on non-tenure track, or contingent, faculty is a well known fact. While the status and working conditions of contingent classroom faculty have been well studied and documented, the corresponding trend in academic libraries has not been explored as deeply. As this paper reviews the limited LIS literature on the subject, it aims to provide administrators and managers with a deeper understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of contingent appointments. It also offers strategies for fostering a workplace culture that recognizes contingent librarians' contributions and promotes their professional growth.

Design/methodology/approach: An overview of scholarly and professional literature on contingent librarianship, this article is based on published research studies and academic articles; given the prominence of anecdotal and personal writing on the subject, columns and first-person essays from trade publications, as well as library-related blogs and job search sites, are also included.

Findings: Contingent librarians have been a steady presence in academic libraries for the last few decades. The trend is continuing. There are specific practices that can be applied to effectively manage contingent librarians.

Originality/value: The article offers academic library administrators and managers a concise yet comprehensive overview of the issues related to contingent appointments.

Keywords: academic libraries, librarians, part-time librarians, temporary librarians, contingent librarians, administration, management

Paper type: General review

Introduction

Academia's overwhelming reliance on contingent faculty is a well known fact. Contingent faculty, as defined by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), are part-time and full-time faculty hired off the tenure track (Contingent Appointments, 2003). In their comprehensive overview of the literature and research on the phenomenon, Kezar and Sam (2010) identify two distinct phases that have resulted in non-tenure track faculty teaching the great majority of students at American colleges and universities today. The expansion of community colleges in the 1970s coincided with the unparalleled hiring of part-time faculty whose numbers have been growing since (Kezar and Sam, 2010, 25). The 1990s, in turn, marked an increase in the number of full-time non-tenure track faculty teaching at four-year institutions (Kezar and Sam, 2010, 26). The American Association of University Professors has been documenting the accelerating trend of non-tenure track appointments. The most recent data available, for the year 2016, indicates that across all US institutions 73 percent of faculty across all higher education institutions are not on the tenure track (Data Snapshot, 2018).

In contrast to the well researched and documented status of contingent faculty, the corresponding trend in academic libraries has been studied less. Librarians have faculty status and are eligible for tenure only at about half of colleges and institutions (Walters, 2016). Academic libraries are affected by the same financial constraints as their host institutions, including limited budgets to hire full-time tenure-track or permanent faculty (Gremmels, 2013; Walters, 2016). And yet, in-depth research and

statistical data on contingent academic librarians, as this article refers to those hired part- or full-time on a temporary basis, without reliably renewable contracts, or a guarantee of job permanency, are not readily available (Bell, 2006; Brustman and Via, 1988; Jones, 2011). The AAUP calculations are limited to instructional faculty only and do not include librarians, even those with faculty status (Bell, 2005). Other statistical reports, such as the ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics and the ARL Salary Survey make no distinction between full- and part-time, temporary and permanent positions. A cursory attempt at assessing the number and ratio of contingent librarians at the author's own institution, the City University of New York, illustrates the challenge of relying on libraries' own online staff directories as a source of information: some libraries in the system do not distinguish between part- and full-time librarians at all; some list only full-time library faculty.

Not only is the prevalence of contingent librarians unquantified, but their professional experience, working conditions, and contributions to academic libraries also remain understudied. Over thirty years ago, Brustman and Via (1988) who conducted one of the early surveys to assess academic libraries' reliance on part-time librarians, noted that "No research fully describes the past or present situation of the part-time academic librarian" (87). The same dismay at how few studies examined the topic in depth was echoed by other researchers who attempted to cast light on the contingent academic librarians' experience (Chervinko, 1986; Gover, 1994; Hogue and Sisson, 1994; Pontau and Rothschild, 1986; Wilkinson, 2015; Wilkinson, 2016).

An overview of literature on the subject, this article gathers and analyzes existing LIS discourse to highlight the research areas and themes that mark the limits of the profession's knowledge about contingent librarianship. Comprehensive in scope, it is based on published research studies and academic articles; given the prominence of anecdotal and personal writing on the subject, columns and first-person essays from trade publications, as well as library-related blogs and job search sites, are also included. While as a category contingent librarianship includes part-time, temporary and substitute librarians, the literature on part-time academic librarians is by far the most extensive, a fact reflected in the review. In cases where a study examined contingent librarians across a variety of settings, only findings specific to academic libraries are reported. The review emphasizes U.S. based academic libraries and citations were identified by searching Education Source, Emerald Insights, ERIC, Google Scholar, Library and Information Science Abstracts, Library and Information Science Source, and Professional Development Collection. Omitted are editorials and letters to the editors, conference proceedings, and dissertations. With no comprehensive data available, the overview starts with studies assessing the prevalence of contingent librarians in academic libraries. Next, the article sums up reasons behind contingent hiring and describes the varied job responsibilities held by contingent librarians. After presenting the precarious professional status contingent librarians occupy, the review then focuses on the opportunities and challenges contingent librarianship presents for administrators and librarians respectively. The next section offers advice on how managers may improve contingent librarians' working conditions. Having demonstrated that contingent

librarians have long played a critical role in academic libraries, the article concludes with a call for new research that would expand and deepen the profession's understanding of contingent appointments.

Contingent Appointments in Academic Libraries

Although precise data on the number of academic librarians hired on a contingent basis are not collected, there have been a few attempts to assess the extent to which libraries employ them. Interestingly, the most in-depth studies on the scale of contingent librarianship were conducted in the late 1980s when this hiring practice was relatively new but already gaining in popularity. Chervinko (1986) looked at temporary librarians, paraprofessionals, and clerical workers who worked either part- or full-time at 100 ARL libraries in the previous five years. Of the 74 libraries that responded to his survey, only 15, or 20%, never hired part-time employees. For the remaining libraries, the hiring practice was still rather new but not unfrequent: 17 libraries relied on four or fewer temporary workers, while 42, or 57%, libraries employed five or more part-timers (Chervinko, 1986).

Similarly, Brustman and Via (1988) surveyed 203 academic libraries to learn about the role part-time librarians play in the organization. Overall, 39.4% of responding libraries employed part-time librarians (Brustman and Via, 1988). Half of these libraries included only one part-timer among the staff; 30% had two part-time librarians, and between 3 to 9 part-time librarians worked in the remaining 20% of the libraries. Terms of part-time employment differed: about of the libraries hired part-timers on a permanent basis, 40% did so on a temporary basis, and 12.5% of libraries offered a combination of

permanent and temporary part-time positions (Brustman and Via, 1988). While the proportion of part-time to full-time librarians was the lowest in public university academic libraries, it was the highest at public 2-year college libraries where it reached 20.3% (Brustman and Via, 1988). Overall, based on the sample, 9.65% of academic librarians were employed part-time; the ratio, Brustman and Via (1988) pointed out, was much the 31.7% ratio of part-timers among teaching faculty.

Pontau (1989) studied employment trends in California's academic libraries, over a five-year period, starting with the fiscal year 1982--83. She surveyed academic library directors about employing librarians, either part- or full-time, who were hired for a specified time period only or worked under periodically renewed contracts without a guarantee of job permanence (Pontau, 1989). All universities, colleges and community colleges employed temporary librarians during the 5-year time period Pontau (1989) studied. Confirming the trend Brustman and Via (1988) noted, Pontau (1989) found that community college libraries were staffed by temporary librarians to a greater extent than other types of academic libraries were. Pontau (1989) further observed an upward trend in the number and proportion of temporary academic librarians hired over the previous past years, an increase reflective of the concurrent trend towards non-permanent employment observable across the American workforce, including academia.

The most recent study attempting to determine the prevalence of contingent librarians was Mayo and Whitehurst' (2012) survey of academic libraries within the North Carolina System and nationwide among East Carolina University's peer institutions. Smaller in scope than the previous studies, the survey yielded responses

from 14 libraries only (Mayo and Whitehurst, 2012). All the responding libraries employed temporary librarians, but the ratio of temporary librarians to full-time permanent librarians was low, ranging from five to ten percent (Mayo and Whitehurst, 2012). Mayo and Whitehurst (2012) echoed Brustman and Via's (1988) observation that, when compared to the number of contingent faculty appointments in academia, the proportion of temporary librarians is remarkably low. As limited as their sample was, Mayo and Whitehurst (2012) posited that there had been no noticeable upward trend to hire more contingent librarians over the previous three decades.

In the absence of post-2012 data specific to academic libraries, it may be necessary to extrapolate from the most recent Library Journal's Placements & Salaries survey of 2017 graduates of ALA-accredited LIS master's degree programs. After public libraries, academic libraries were the second largest type of organization employing new librarians. With 85% of new graduates being employed full-time and only 15% on a part-time basis, 2017 marked the fourth year in a row where the full-time employment rate was above 80% (Allard, 2018). While the survey does not distinguish between temporary and permanent full-time employment and the data is not limited to academic libraries, the LJ survey results suggest that the hiring rate of contingent librarians holds steady, confirming Mayo and Whitehurst's (2012) assessment.

The rationale for hiring contingent librarians varies across organizations, but the key factors driving contingent employment in academic libraries are the unavailability of full-time permanent positions, the need to substitute for librarians on leave, and the necessity to staff the reference desk in the evenings and on weekends (Mayo and

Whitehurst, 2012; Pontau, 1989). Grant-funded and other special projects, fellowships, and faculty spousal hiring account for additional reasons why librarians are hired on a contingent basis (Falk and Boettcher, 2001; Mayo and Whitehurst, 2012).

As Brustman and Via (1988) observed, contingent librarians “are engaged in all aspects of library service” (90). The range of tasks and duties they perform is extensive and aligned with their educational and professional backgrounds. Hogue and Sisson (1994) found that most of their survey respondents had an MLIS degree and over 10 years of professional experience. The areas most frequently assigned to contingent librarians include reference and related public services roles (Brustman and Via, 1988; Pontau, 1989; Hogue and Sisson, 1994; Mayo and Whitehurst, 2012). Contingent librarians also work in acquisitions, cataloging, circulation, collection development, and archives (Brustman and Via, 1988; Chervinko, 1986; Mayo and Whitehurst, 2012; Pontau, 1989). However, they rarely occupy administrative and supervisory positions (Hogue and Sisson, 1994).

The variety of work functions and responsibilities contingent librarians assume is not reflected in their professional status, however. The literature has consistently documented the fact that contingent librarians do not have access to wages, benefits, and professional development opportunities comparable to those enjoyed by their permanent full-time colleagues. Braudy and Tuckerman’s (1986) informal survey of part-time librarians signaled issues, such as very limited fringe, health, and retirement benefits, that have not been resolved to date. Brustman and Via (1988) also noted the “differential treatment in pay and benefits, as well as fewer opportunities, rights, and

privileges” that further exacerbated the status divide between full- and part-time librarians (90). Of particular concern were part-timers’ exclusion from faculty privileges and full participation in the department, including ineligibility for tenure, sabbaticals, committee service, and conference travel reimbursements (Via and Brustman, 1988). In turn, Hogue and Sisson (1994) found that most benefits were not even available to part-time librarians. All in all, as the literature clearly shows, the meager benefits and privileges offered to contingent librarians are out of step with the roles they play in their organizations.

Contingent Librarianship: Advantages and Disadvantages

In their study of contingent employment practices across UK libraries, including academic libraries, Goulding and Kerslake (1996) concluded that the “LIS flexible labour force is generally employer led and exists primarily for the convenience of the organization” (16). To optimize the gains such working arrangements offer, administrators need to have a full “appreciation of the potential pitfalls as well as the manifold benefits” that relying on an increasingly contingent library workforce involves (Goulding and Kerslake, 1996, 16). The existing literature provides an in-depth overview of key advantages and drawbacks of contingent academic librarianship, as perceived by administrators and librarians themselves. To present the many nuances and implications of this employment model, the following section reviews administrators’ views on the pluses and minuses of employing contingent librarians. To offer a fuller picture of the stakes involved, contingent librarians’ own assessment of what constitutes the best and worst aspects of their jobs complements the administrators’ perspectives.

Administrators' Perspectives

Chervinko's 1986 survey identified key administrative advantages of hiring temporary and part-time librarians and library staff. Administrators faced with budgetary constraints cited short-term financial obligations and no long-term fringe benefits commitments as major benefits of employing contingent workers (Chervinko, 1986). In addition to enabling fiscal savings, contingent librarians were perceived to aid managerial and operational flexibility. Individuals with specialized skills could be hired as needed, and special projects could be undertaken without diverting permanent staff from their regular duties (Chervinko, 1986). Contingent workers were also seen as a valuable pool for potential future hires; indeed, many of the libraries Chervinko surveyed did offer permanent positions to those initially hired on a temporary basis (Chervinko, 1986). Extending services and library hours beyond the regular workweek were the main operational advantages afforded by contingent librarians.

Subsequent surveys of library administrators echoed similar gains. Pontau (1989) reported that temporary librarians offered much needed staffing and scheduling flexibility in a climate of fiscal austerity and declining enrollments. Increased operational flexibility, greater staffing efficiency, higher rates of project completion, and professional expertise complementing that of permanent librarians, were some of the advantages listed by Mayo and Whitehurst's (2012) respondents.

The significant administrative advantages of relying on contingent librarians do not come without some challenges that managers and directors need to address. Chervinko's (1986) respondents commented on the incommensurability between the

long training period and the brevity of employment. Other drawbacks were the temporary workers' perceived lack of professional commitment, high turnover rates, and the inability to retain valuable temporary workers after a project ends (Chervinko 1986). The need for supervision, juggling complex scheduling, and navigating a changed workplace dynamics were among other managerial costs (Chervinko, 1986).

In addition to echoing the concerns Chervinko (1986) raised, the findings of Pontau's (1989) survey suggest that the hiring of contingent librarians to fill public services positions diminishes the amount of direct interaction between patrons and permanent librarians, a change that may affect the full-timers' job satisfaction. Reinhold (1996) adds the challenge of effective communication, increased need for recordkeeping and additional workspace to the administrative and managerial disadvantages of employing contingent librarians. Mayo and Whitehurst's (2012) survey, in turn, revealed that administrators' stress levels increase as time contracts near conclusion, and full-time librarians experience the training and supervision of contingent librarians as a burdensome workload, an attitude reflective of the unequal status dynamic between the two groups.

Contingent Librarians' Perspectives

While administrators' perspectives on the advantages and drawbacks of employing contingent librarians offer some insight into the practice, we can gain further insight by understanding how contingent librarians themselves experience the terms of their employment. If surveys of library directors and managers dominate the literature on the organizational benefits and costs of contingent librarianship, first-person

accounts, published in professional journals and blogs, convey the nuances of working as a librarian without a job security. The few existing systematic surveys of contingent librarians (Hogue & Sisson, 1994; Wilkinson, 2015) corroborate the satisfactions and concerns articulated in these first-person accounts.

In her essay on part-time academic librarianship as an ideal profession for mothers like herself, Laynor (1988) described flexibility and career continuity as the greatest advantages of working half-time. As a woman-dominated profession, Laynor (1988) argued, librarianship needed to accommodate the work-life balance needs of mother librarians who wished to combine family and professional lives. Part-time employment, then, appeared as simultaneously advantageous to libraries wishing to retain mothers and librarians wanting to remain professionally active after having children (Laynor, 1988). As Laynor (1988) saw it, part-time employment constituted a smart response to librarians' work needs.

Similarly, Reinhold (1996) suggested that an increase in the number of available part-time positions would signal the profession's awareness of librarians' needs that do not fit in the rigid full-time career model. Although women were the most obvious beneficiaries of the newly flexible work arrangements, Reinhold (1996) saw other groups who would be drawn to part-time librarianship, including people with disabilities, those nearing retirement age, or those who were transitioning into librarianship from other professions. Promoting part-time librarianship would foster greater diversity within the profession, a gain that should be encouraged (Reinhold, 1996).

Scheduling flexibility and the ability to maintain a career, both emphasized by Laynor (1988) and Reinhold (1996), do indeed appear as key advantages of contingent librarianship. They are identified as the greatest upsides in all subsequent first-person essays and reflections, as well as in survey responses (Falk and Boettcher, 2001; Hogue and Sisson, 1994; Johnston, 2004; Wamsley, 2014; Wilkinson, 2015). Reduced stress and limited involvement in workplace conflicts or politics also rank consistently high among the advantages afforded by working less than full time (Hogue and Sisson, 1994; Wilkinson, 2015).

It is worth noting that the above positives--flexibility, career continuity, lower stress levels--were reported most often by those who willingly chose part-time work over full-time employment. As Wilkinson (2015) notes, the 1980's and 1990's literature on part-time and other non-permanent positions presents contingent librarianship as a choice. Not surprisingly, the satisfaction levels with such work arrangements were high. In subsequent decades, as the job market tightens and full-time jobs are harder to obtain, part-time and similar positions become the only available--rather than the preferred-- option (Wilkinson, 2015).

Since the 2000s, librarians who work on a contingent basis out of necessity rather than by choice have a different perception of what makes contingent employment valuable. While flexibility remains important, part-time and other non-permanent employment is seen as providing the opportunity to start out in the profession and gain experience that will increase the likelihood of a full-time job offer (Falk & Boettcher, 2001; Johnston, 2004; Wamsley, 2014; Wilkinson, 2015). Other positive aspects of

contingent librarianship, as reported by academic librarians currently working under such arrangements, further highlight the strategic benefits such jobs provide. Falk and Boettcher (2001) describe a grant project that allowed a temporary cataloger to gain sufficient professional experience to secure a full-time tenure track position. While working on a temporary basis, the cataloger participated in professional development trainings, took on varied departmental functions, and participated in library and campus events. All these experiences not only greatly extended her understanding of academic librarianship, but they also strengthened her candidacy for full-time positions (Falk & Boettcher, 2001). Johnston (2004) writes about her concurrently held part-time library jobs as a substitute for the full-time position she ultimately wants to find. These temporary positions allow her to experience different kinds of libraries, better understand the distinction between tenure track and non-tenure track librarianship, use library school training in a hands-on context, and even build her publishing record (Johnston, 2004). Similarly, Wamsley (2014) focuses on using her part-time library jobs as an effective path to professional advancement, culminating in a full-time position. As complex as balancing four different library-related part-time positions is, Wamsley (2014) values the exposure to a variety of library contexts and duties it requires. Holding multiple positions was admittedly the only way she was able to remain in a preferred geographic area, but Wamsley (2014) came to realize the networking opportunities such juggling offered. Similarly, gaining professional experience, ability to remain in a preferred geographic location, and exposures to different library settings are some of

the top advantages of part-time work identified by the early-career librarians Wilkinson (2015) surveyed.

The numerous advantages of contingent librarianship highlight the positive aspects of working on non-permanent basis. Yet, all of these reports, whether it be first-person narratives, opinion and advice pieces, or survey responses, do not stop at the advantages of contingent employment. The negative aspects, often outnumbering the positives, feature in all of the writings about contingent librarianship.

Embracing as it was of part-time librarianship, the 1980's and 1990's conversation on the topic noted the accompanying drawbacks. Laynor (1988), who saw part-time librarianship as the perfect solution for working mothers, was not unaware of its problems. She cited low salaries, the lack of benefits, no professional development or advancement opportunities, and expectations of output incommensurable with number of hours worked as some of the pitfalls part-time librarians experience (Laynor, 1988). Workplace dynamics, including tense relations with full-timers and negative perceptions by supervisors who questioned the part-timers' job commitment, contributed to the unequal status and treatment of full- and part-time librarians (Laynor, 1988). Concerns about limited professional development and career advancement opportunities, inferior status, and being perceived as lacking job commitment featured prominently in Hogue and Sisson's (1994) survey responses as well. To the above disadvantages part-time librarians experience, Reinhold (1996) added low visibility and stress resulting from duties overload. All in all, the earlier literature presented part-time

academic librarianship as a balancing act between terms of employment and work conditions that at once enabled and stalled one's career.

More recent accounts by part-time librarians continue to voice this ambivalence as the advantages of part-time work remain inseparable from its challenges. The lack of benefits, limited or no support for professional development, low status, and insufficient pay are still the key negative aspects of contingent librarianship (Wamsley, 2014; Wilkinson, 2015). While none of the earlier problems have been resolved, a tighter job market produced new issues. Wamsley (2014) touches on the precariousness of being an on-call librarian whose hours--and thus salary-- depends on the changing needs and fluctuating budget of the library where she works. Wilkinson (2015) also found that unpredictable scheduling and no set minimum number of hours were of concern to part-time librarians.

As the above overview suggests, since the 1980s, administrators and librarians have been strikingly consistent in identifying the pros and cons of contingent librarianship. It is not surprising that, driven by different priorities, managers and librarians perceive the advantages and challenges it presents differently. What profits libraries--flexibility in scheduling, lower employment costs, access to expertise on as-needed basis--comes as a cost to contingent librarians who cannot rely on a set workweek, benefits and a salary commensurate with their skills and professional acumen.

Management Practices for Improving Contingent Librarians' Work Experience

If academic libraries come to follow academia's trend of offering contingent employment at a rate greatly exceeding the number of available permanent full-time positions, it is imperative that administrators and managers address the seemingly intractable problems highlighted in the preceding section. In the decades since contingent librarians became a permanent presence in academic libraries, there have been calls to action on their behalf. The early advocates for part-time librarians Braudy and Tuckerman (1986) argued that working towards "increasing the status of the part-timer, the library and the college, as well as the part-time employee, will benefit" (38). Braudy and Tuckerman (1986) invoked the 1976 ALA resolution on part-time employment, codified as Section 54.9 in the current *ALA Policy Manual*, as they called for prorated pay and benefits, job responsibilities aligned with professional experience, opportunities for career development and advancement, all of which would raise the status of part-time librarians. In her call for improving the terms of employment of part-time librarians, Laynor (1988) referred to the 1978 Federal Employees Part-Time Career Employment Act that required federal agencies to prorate permanent part-timers' health and other benefits on the basis of the number of hours worked. Reinhold (1996) urged the profession to embrace the "New Concept" of part-time work, as the economist Hilda Kahne named positions below the weekly 35 hours mark with "wages that are prorated to that of equivalent full-time work and payment of benefits" (28). As subsequent studies examining the status of contingent librarians indicate, the terms of their employment vary greatly. While Mayo and Whitehurst (2012) found that temporary librarians were paid and offered benefits comparable to those received by

permanent full-time faculty, the respondents to Wilkinson's (2015) survey received low salaries and limited, if any, benefits. The more recent first-person accounts cited above show that pro-rated salaries and benefits have not been widely implemented (Johnston, 2004; Wamsley, 2014).

While terms of employment are often dictated by the larger institution and cannot be entirely set by library administrators themselves, the day-to-day working conditions of contingent librarians can be addressed locally. The literature provides some guidance on how to promote organizational culture that would result in improved workplace experience. A library where the varied contributions contingent librarians make to the organization are recognized and where they are treated as equal members of staff will not resolve issues of unequal pay and benefits, of course. However, such efforts may be the first step in achieving parity between permanent and contingent librarians. As signaled by the literature, there are several areas where managerial practices have the most impact on increasing the job satisfaction among contingent librarians: planning, onboarding, access to training and professional development opportunities, methods of communication, including evaluative feedback, and various inclusive strategies aiming to establish equal status among all library staff.

There is a consensus that thoughtful planning is necessary to ensure new contingent librarians will be fully integrated with the library and staff (Chervinko, 1986; Falk & Boetcher, 2001; Pontau and Rotschild, 1986). Among the key considerations, Goulding and Kerlake (1996) list the ratio between contingent and full-time permanent librarians as the proportion may change the workplace dynamics. Furthermore,

managers need to evaluate which positions can or cannot be appropriately adapted to and staffed by contingent librarians (Goulding and Kerlake, 1996). The minimum of weekly hours is yet another issue that deserves attention as some tasks and responsibilities can be fulfilled in fairly limited time while others cannot (Goulding and Kerlake, 1996). The logistics of effective coordination and communication should not be underestimated either as they determine the effectiveness of the new position (Goulding and Kerlake, 1996). Workspace reorganization emerges as yet another practical matter that needs to be settled before a new librarian comes onboard (Laynor, 1988; Reinhold, 1996). Ideally, the workstation placement would not only accommodate the new hire but also promote collaboration between contingent and permanent librarians (Falk & Boettcher, 2001).

Once the decision to hire is made in light of the above considerations, a detailed job description needs to be written. The details need to account for the nature of tasks and work to be performed and how they fit within a larger workflow of the library (Falk and Boettcher, 2001). As important as specifying the parameters of the new position is, Pontau and Rothschild (1986) warn that “Defining the temporary professional’s role too narrowly can waste staff hours, energy, enthusiasm, and experience” (153). Allowing for some flexibility and variety of duties guarantees exposure to a wider array of library functions, thus deepening the contingent librarian’s familiarity and involvement with the organization, both of which lead to greater job satisfaction and lower turnover (Chervinko, 1986; Falk and Boettcher, 2001). For example, Jones (2011) advocates

engaging part-time librarians in various “projects that will contribute to the library’s development and bring recognition to staff for the contribution they have made” (40).

Well designed orientation and onboarding are important because they introduce the new hire to other staff, local procedures and operations (Chervinko, 1986; Pontau and Rotschild, 1986; Jones, 2011). This process is especially crucial because contingent librarians tend to work at times when full-time staff may not present and able to assist with procedural and related queries. A solid job introduction needs to account for the fact that contingent librarians spend less time in the library than full-timers do. Jones (2011) recommends that there be a library manual, in print and online, that would provide an easy access to a summary of operational and emergency procedures, a list all service points, a map of the physical facilities, and answers to unusual queries or issues that rarely come up.

Although tight or limited scheduling makes for a challenge, appropriate training and ample opportunities for professional development are of great importance as well (Chervinko, 1986; Goulding & Kerlake, 1996; Jones, 2011). Support for professional development may involve covering the cost of training, if any, allowing time for attending workshops during regular work hours, or counting attendance at professional events as work hours. Another aspect of training and professional development relates to offering regular and timely appraisals of new updates or changes in library systems, resources, and procedures.

Effective communication not only facilitates training and professional development, but it also plays a role in fostering an inclusive and collaborative work

environment in which contingent librarians are treated as valuable members of library staff. Jones (2011) recommends multiple methods of reaching librarians who do not work regular hours; email, bulletin boards, a reference wiki, or a log are possible ways to share information. Face to face communication shouldn't be underestimated either. While periodic meetings help address issues as they come up, regular job performance evaluations provide feedback and identify areas for improvement. Communicating the presence and contributions of contingent librarians to the larger campus community further establishes their crucial role in the organization. Contingent librarians should be listed in staff directories, nominated for institutional awards, and their professional accomplishments featured in library newsletters (Jones, 2011). Such inclusive efforts reinforce the professional position contingent librarians occupy in the organization.

The various management strategies listed above address and work within the limits of contingent employment terms. Library administrators often do not have the power to offer higher salaries and better benefits. However, as the practical recommendations culled from the literature show, they have the capacity to shape a workplace where contingent librarians are respected and embraced as professionals and colleagues.

Conclusion

In their overview of scholarship on contingent faculty, Kezar and Sam (2010) argue that higher education researchers have an obligation to study and understand non-tenure track faculty because they “are key to creating the teaching and learning environments” for an ever growing number of students (3). Similarly, the decades-long

practice of employing contingent librarians, the roles they play in academic libraries, and the impact they have on library patrons, all deserve the attention of LIS researchers. The recurring refrain in the literature is that we know too little about contingent librarians because no reliable data are collected and little research has been done. Indeed, there was more interest in contingent librarianship in the 1980s and 1990s than there has been in the past two decades. Until future studies reassess contingent appointments in academic libraries, the existing literature and its insights do point a way forward. This review sought to demonstrate that administrators and managers can use and apply what is already known to promote a workplace culture that attends to the benefits and drawbacks of such working arrangements, recognizes contingent librarians' contributions to the organization, and creates professional growth opportunities for contingent and permanent librarians alike.

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