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Four Legs Make a Table: Service and Identity in Academic Librarianship

Maura A. Smale

The importance of service in higher education as one leg of what is often referred to as the three-legged stool—teaching, service, and scholarship—is typically an expectation of tenure line faculty in all disciplines, and academic librarians in tenure-track positions also are expected to perform service as part of their responsibilities. Unlike many other fields, librarianship is a service profession; indeed, it is often suggested that service is at the core of library work. Librarians manage and provide access to collections, create metadata to enable those collections to be used, teach patrons how to use and critically evaluate collections, and answer questions of all kinds, among other library work in service to their communities. For academic librarians the boundaries between librarianship, service, and scholarship are highly permeable, almost by definition. Navigating service commitments—to the institution, community, and profession—can be a balancing act for all faculty, especially as expectations for scholarly production continue to increase, and this work is complicated for library faculty by the integral role that service plays in our professional identity as academic librarians.

In this exploration of service and identity for academic librarians I will draw on my professional role as a library director and my identity as a feminist. An integral component of my work is to consult with and mentor my colleagues as they negotiate service on the path to tenure and promotion; as a feminist library director I endeavor to empower them in all of their library work, including service. While collaborating with colleagues

to shape their service workload I try to create an environment that is conscious of gender, race, and other identities in striving to craft a meaningful, manageable slate of service activities. However, academia is a hierarchical space, and service can be used to reinforce those hierarchies, especially for academic librarians who may endure the perception that they are not “real” faculty. My aim is to encourage and support my colleagues in their service commitments to achieve their professional goals, while also providing space to resist the hierarchies that may place an undue service burden on academic librarians as workers in a service-intensive profession.

My Institutional and Personal Context

I am Chief Librarian and a tenured library faculty member at New York City College of Technology (City Tech), one of the twenty-five institutions, community and baccalaureate colleges through graduate and professional schools, that make up the City University of New York (CUNY). Librarians at CUNY are tenure line faculty and as such we have the same expectations for reappointment, tenure, and promotion as do faculty in other departments. At CUNY service is an essential part of faculty work: it is not optional, and faculty cannot expect to advance in their careers without engaging in service to their department and college. As is often the case at public institutions of higher education with funding limitations, service loads for CUNY faculty can be substantial. Further, while teaching remains the primary focus of the university, the importance of service is sometimes in tension with increasing expectations for faculty research and scholarly production across CUNY.

While many academic librarians with faculty status may not be seen as equals outside of the library,¹ at City Tech my experience has (almost) always been that library faculty are viewed as peers by our colleagues in the faculty and administration. The college offers both associate and baccalaureate degrees in technical and professional disciplines, and faculty are typically hired with prior experience that ranges from the traditional academic PhD to Masters-level terminal degrees in fields that include communication design, hospitality management, and allied health. Library faculty at CUNY are required to hold both a Master of Library and Information Science as well as an additional graduate degree. With no expectation that faculty in any department necessarily hold doctoral degrees, the value of

1 Lisa Sloniowski, “Affective Labor, Resistance, and the Academic Librarian,” *Library Trends* 64, no. 4 (2016): 660.

varied paths to the professoriate is a foundational aspect of the City Tech community.

I am a strong advocate of faculty status for librarians and appreciate the opportunities that my institution affords librarians as members of the faculty, though I also acknowledge the tensions in this role. Library faculty are visible and engaged in college and university service at City Tech. We bring our expertise to our service responsibilities, as do faculty in other departments; however, as members of a service-intensive profession, librarians' experiences with service to the institution can be somewhat different than those of faculty in other departments. At City Tech we are thirteen library faculty working with 400 full-time faculty, 1,100 adjunct faculty, and over 17,000 students, and there are both challenges and opportunities in our setting of a small library in a large institution.²

My own experiences with service—first as a library faculty member on the tenure track, and now as Chief Librarian—have necessarily varied during my time at City Tech. The identities I hold as a white, cisgender, straight, middle class woman with a doctoral degree have influenced my experiences with service, in ways that are both advantageous and constraining. As a new library faculty member on the tenure track I was encouraged by the former library director to take on service responsibilities early in my career. At the time I coordinated the library's information literacy and instruction program and many of my service commitments were congruent with that role, for example, serving on the college's Curriculum Committee. My initial participation in college service, along with my other experience, opened the door to other opportunities for service, and I was invited to join a team of faculty at the college in writing a proposal for a large institutional grant from the U.S. Department of Education. After the grant was funded, I was first a member of the project implementation team, and subsequently served as Project Director for two years, a substantial service commitment that prepared me well to apply for the position of Chief Librarian.

When I was hired as the library director my relationship with service shifted as well. I have more discretion about where to focus my time and energy since service is no longer required for me to seek further promotions in rank, though there are both required and "optional" service obligations that are a function of my administrative role. My role in the

2 In larger libraries and at more research-intensive institutions, especially those with doctoral programs, the role of service for librarians and faculty may be different from what I describe here.

library has also shifted to mentoring my colleagues, especially untenured colleagues, as they navigate their service roles along the tenure track and in seeking future promotions. As I write this, our library has been through several recent retirements and hiring cycles, and seven of my twelve colleagues are untenured. In my own career I have sometimes struggled with taking on too many commitments, both service and otherwise, especially opportunities to work on projects or with colleagues that aligned well with my interests. Like many tenure-track faculty I sometimes found myself overcommitted and unsure of when and whether I could or should respectfully decline to take on new projects. I actively try to balance my own service commitments as I work with my colleagues to shape their service commitments, and to consider our gender, racial, and other identities as we all negotiate service work.

Service in Academia and Librarianship Through an Intersectional Feminist Lens

Academia and Service

Across higher education service is generally understood to be an integral component of the faculty role. The metaphor that is often used to describe the job of faculty is that of a three-legged stool, with one leg each representing teaching, scholarly research, and service. Massé and Hogan assert that “without the labor of service, most institutions of higher education in this country would fold;” however, they continue by noting that, despite its importance, faculty service has not been adequately analyzed or discussed, especially as compared to teaching and research in academia.³

The time that faculty are expected to (and do) allocate to each leg of the stool varies both individually as well as through the course of a faculty member’s career. Factors that may influence service load include, though are not limited to: scholarly discipline; tenure/promotion status and academic rank; individual interests; gender, racial, and other identities; and personal lives outside of work. More specifically, expectations and time available for teaching, scholarship, and service can vary widely by type of institution. The teaching workload is high at community colleges, for example, with faculty expected to teach four or five courses each term, while

3 Michelle A. Massé and Katie J. Hogan, “Introduction,” in *Over Ten Million Served: Gendered Service in Language and Literature Workplaces*, ed. Michelle A. Massé and Katie J. Hogan (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010), 1–2.

requirements for scholarly research and production are higher at universities, especially private, doctoral institutions, where faculty may teach only one or two courses per term and benefit from the work of teaching assistants, as well. At some colleges and universities where scholarly research and publication is the primary factor on which faculty are evaluated for tenure, the expectation is that untenured assistant professors will do very little service as they work toward promotion, and that their colleagues at the associate professor rank will carry the bulk of the service load for the department and institution. The tension that many associate professors feel in attempting to balance their newly-heavy service responsibilities with continuing their scholarly research as they work toward promotion to (full) professor is well-documented.⁴ Whatever a faculty member's rank and tenure status, there is wide agreement that extensive service commitments reduce the time available for scholarship, which can affect progression on and beyond the tenure track.

Faculty service can take different forms across and within institutions and disciplines. Service to the department might include developing curriculum, advising students, or acting as secretary for department meetings. Service to the college or university fulfills an administrative role, in which faculty members may work within committees to advise on or develop policy for specific areas of the institution, for example, academic technology or core curriculum requirements. Governance in the form of a faculty senate or college council, to which faculty are elected, can be one of the most highly-visible forms of service to the institution. Finally, many faculty are also involved in service to the profession or discipline, which can entail working on committees or interest groups within a discipline-specific scholarly or professional association at the local, regional, national, or international level.

Identity and Academic Service

Institutions of higher education express and reproduce the patriarchal, white supremacist system of American culture and society, and gender and race have a clear impact on faculty service. Many studies have examined the ways in which faculty service embodies “institutional caregiving, [which,] like domestic work, is heavily gendered.”⁵ Several decades of

4 Joy Misra, Jennifer Hicks Lundquist, Elissa Holmes, and Stephanie Agiomavritis. “The Ivory Ceiling of Service Work.” *Academe* 97, no. 1 (2011).

5 Massé and Hogan, “Introduction,” 7.

research have documented the disproportionate burden of service on women in the academy, and the ways in which extensive service commitments can impede women's advancement toward tenure and promotion.⁶ Some have suggested that the emphasis on collaboration in many service roles "is associated with femininity while it is simultaneously low in the currency of the tenure and promotion economy."⁷ Other research has found that men who are tenured "are more protective of their research time," while tenured women "devote more time to teaching, mentoring, and service, and particularly to activities that may be seen as building bridges around the university," important work which is valued less highly than scholarship for promotion and advancement.⁸

As in our broader society, race and ethnicity also have an impact on faculty service loads, especially the intersectional impact on women of color. While the number of faculty of color continues to rise slowly in the U.S., faculty of color are still underrepresented in U.S. colleges and universities, especially at the professor rank. Lim notes that "minority women faculty in particular are in short supply in the American research university, but the demand for their service is ever-increasing."⁹ Expectations for service by faculty of color can include both formal assignments, such as serving on institutional diversity and inclusion committees, as well as informal activities like advising students of color who seek out the few faculty of color at an institution. Additionally, narrow definitions of what constitutes service can negatively impact faculty of color, especially those activities related to public service.¹⁰ It bears noting that mentorship—of both students and faculty—is important service work that often falls disproportionately on women and faculty of color. It is also concerning that

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- 6 Shelley M. Park, "Research, Teaching, and Service: Why Shouldn't Women's Work Count?," *The Journal of Higher Education* 67, no. 1 (1996); Karen Pyke, "Service and Gender Inequity among Faculty," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44, no. 1 (2011).
 - 7 Kirsti Cole and Holly Hassel, "Introduction," in *Surviving Sexism in Academia: Strategies for Feminist Leadership*, ed. Kirsti Cole and Holly Hassel (New York: Routledge, 2017), xvii.
 - 8 Misra, Lundquist, Holmes, and Agiomavritis, "The Ivory Ceiling," 24.
 - 9 Shirley Geok-lin Lim, "To Serve or Not to Serve: Nobler Question," in *Over Ten Million Served: Gendered Service in Language and Literature Workplaces*, ed. Michelle A. Massé and Katie J. Hogan (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010), 158.
 - 10 Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs, Yolanda Flores Niemann, and Carmen G. González, eds. *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2012); Patricia A. Matthew, ed. *Written/Unwritten: Diversity and the Hidden Truths of Tenure* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

formal mentoring programs “are sanctioned by institutions and, thus, embedded in the existing power structures of the academy.”¹¹

Academic Librarianship and Service

Librarianship—in and outside of academia—is a service-intensive profession, and much has been written about the role of service in librarianship. Hicks’ study of professional identity among public, academic, special, and school librarians revealed service as the most prominent theme that surfaced in interviews about the profession, and indeed service “was often considered to be the essence of librarianship.”¹² This research demonstrated that service is an integral component of the relationship between librarians and patrons, conclusions that I imagine will resonate with most practicing librarians.¹³

The role that service plays in the professional identity of librarians is complicated by the status of librarianship as a feminized profession. Like other professions that are majority female, librarianship is “predominantly service-, support-, and care-oriented,”¹⁴ and Hicks notes that, for her research participants, “the provision of high-quality service was often posited as the best way to demonstrate librarianship’s professionalism.”¹⁵ However, the challenges of establishing and maintaining professional status in a field numerically dominated by women are well-documented. Over two decades ago Harris examined the professional identity of librarianship in detail, and documented the tension between the desire to provide high-quality service in the role of librarian with the reality that “relatively little value is attached to women’s endeavor.”¹⁶ Harris concluded that in librarianship

11 Jen Almjeld, Meg McGuire, and Kristine L. Blair, “Organic Mentorship: A Feminist Model to Support Scholars and Leaders,” in *Surviving Sexism in Academia: Strategies for Feminist Leadership*, ed. Kirsti Cole and Holly Hassel (New York: Routledge, 2017), 216.

12 Deborah Hicks, “The Construction of Librarians’ Professional Identities: A Discourse Analysis,” *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science* 38, no. 4 (2014): 258.

13 Hicks, 261.

14 Shana Higgins, “Embracing the Feminization of Librarianship,” in *Feminists Among Us: Resistance and Advocacy in Library Leadership*, ed. Shirley Lew and Baharak Yousefi (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2017), 70.

15 Hicks, “Construction of Librarians’ Professional Identities,” 262.

16 Roma Harris, *Librarianship: The Erosion of a Woman’s Profession* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1992), 16.

“professionalism will almost inevitably lead to a movement away from service which, for many people, represent the core of the female-intensive professions,”¹⁷ and urged librarians to resist this pressure and continue to focus on service as a core value of librarianship.

This tension between librarianship as a service-intensive profession and service as an integral component of the faculty role can be problematic in academic librarianship. Academic librarians in tenure-line positions may be comparable to faculty in other departments, according to institutional policies and procedures, yet other faculty may “not regard librarians as their academic peers.”¹⁸ As academic libraries have become more involved in scholarly publishing and digital initiatives across the university, these tensions have continued to evolve. In her influential examination of academic librarianship and the digital humanities, Shirazi notes that:

“We perform labor that reproduces the academy, from teaching information literacy, research skills and citation formats to students, to selecting, cataloging, and preserving materials for current and future use. This work is vital and it is intellectual labor, but because it does not conform to the publish or perish model at the top of the academic hierarchy, it is reduced to (and devalued as) ‘service.’”¹⁹

The understanding of librarianship as a service profession permeates our faculty service work, too. Even as academic librarians engage in service to the college and university we are always engaged in library work as well: responding to questions about services or resources that the library offers, advocating for the integral role that the library plays in the work of the institution, providing ad hoc reference consultations in the few minutes before a committee meeting begins. It is unlikely that our faculty colleagues in other departments are being asked to teach or to offer their particular disciplinary expertise in similar situations.

17 Harris, “Librarianship,” 19.

18 Harris, 85; Sloniowski, “Affective Labor,” 660; Alyssa Jocson Porter, Sharon Spence-Wilcox, and Kimberly Tate-Malone, “I, Too: Unmasking Emotional Labor of Women of Color Community College Librarians,” in *Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS*, ed. Rose L. Chou and Annie Pho (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2018), 278.

19 Roxanne Shirazi, “Reproducing the Academy: Librarians and the Question of Service in the Digital Humanities,” *Roxanne Shirazi* (blog), 2014.

Hicks has noted the connection between advocacy for the importance of library services and advocacy for the profession of librarianship.²⁰ Unlike faculty in other departments, who teach courses for which students pay tuition, the library in many ways represents an expense for an institution; when institutional funding contracts, the library is vulnerable to budget cuts that affect the work of librarians in ways that are different for faculty in other departments. Thus, our every interaction with a member of the college community is an opportunity for advocacy on behalf of the library, every conversation a potential focus group, all in service of highlighting the library's worth. But how and where is that labor valued? As a feminist leader who is committed to transparency, I share as much information about the library's budget with my colleagues as I can, though I acknowledge that this may exacerbate the pressure we feel to advocate for the library within the college.

As we have seen, faculty service is always already gendered, and I would posit that institutional service work for academic librarians is additionally feminized. Complexities increase when we consider race, ethnicity, and other minoritized identities, since "women and minorities are proportionately overrepresented when we start to tally who's doing the institution's housework."²¹ Academic librarianship is not immune to increased service pressures on librarians of color; as Damasco and Hodges found in their study, many tenure-line librarians of color "struggle with service commitments, particularly when they are called upon to provide the 'diversity' perspective within their institutions,"²² both inside and outside the library. Research by Anantachai and Chesley revealed similar insights—the majority of the women of color tenure-line librarians they surveyed "felt that they took on more service activities because of their racial identity."²³ For some librarians who participated in this study, diversity work was not weighted as strongly in their tenure and promotion process as service and research not specifically related to diversity. These women then

20 Deborah Hicks, "Advocating for Librarianship: The Discourses of Advocacy and Service in the Professional Identities of Librarians," *Library Trends* 64, no. 3 (2016): 616.

21 Massé and Hogan, "Introduction," 7.

22 Ione T. Damasco and Dracine Hodges, "Tenure and Promotion Experiences of Academic Librarians of Color," *College & Research Libraries* 73, no. 3 (2012): 299.

23 Tarida Anantachai and Camille Chesley, "The Burden of Care: Cultural Taxation of Women of Color Librarians on the Tenure-Track," in *Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS*, ed. Rose L. Chou and Annie Pho (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2018), 313.

felt the need to increase their workload to meet their institution's expectations and progress in their careers.²⁴

Negotiating Service, Mentoring Colleagues

As a feminist library director, I strive to acknowledge the tensions of service in academic librarianship both in my own service commitments and as I work with my colleagues in negotiating their service responsibilities. When considering each of my service opportunities, I try to be mindful of my identities and overall workload as well as my goals for myself and the library as a whole. For example, serving on a collegewide promotion committee, while time-consuming, provides me with insights into the promotion process that I can share with my colleagues in the library who are working toward their next promotion. I am grateful to be at a stage in my career where I can often resist what I perceive as low-quality service, including committees without an agenda or with an uneven distribution of tasks, work that does not interest me, or service which is likely to lead to little benefit for my colleagues or the library.

While all librarian jobs are service-intensive, my colleagues' varied roles in the library differ in their visibility to the broader college and university communities, which we keep in mind as we consider their service commitments. Positions in technical services may not provide frequent opportunities to interact with faculty at our college, though library faculty in these positions engage in service across our university as part of the resource sharing work of all CUNY libraries. For instruction and reference librarians the reverse can hold true: they necessarily work with faculty across our college in information literacy efforts and are not required to do service work at our university, though many do. Service to the college offers occasions to meet faculty outside the library independent of our responsibilities in the library.

Service as a way to increase visibility across our college and university is an important, if difficult to quantify, aspect of faculty service for my colleagues. The importance of visibility that service can offer also varies as library faculty progress along the tenure track and when they consider promotions in rank. Committees made up of faculty from across the disciplines are convened throughout the reappointment and promotion process at our college, and it can be advantageous when committees meet to review candidates if library faculty are known across the campus. Increasing

24 Anantachai and Chesley, "The Burden of Care," 311.

the visibility of library faculty across the college is also a form of advocacy for the library as a whole, especially in a time of decreased funding at our university, when we may feel pressure to demonstrate the value of our work to the institution.

CUNY is a resource-constrained institution and there are typically limited funds for faculty in any discipline to travel extensively for service or scholarship, which necessarily limits the professional service that faculty undertake. Here, too, is a tension: it has been suggested that for “career advancement, external service normally generates greater value to the individual faculty member, as it provides visibility and enhances his or her reputation among a broad group of peers,”²⁵ and for library faculty professional service can be one way to gain leadership or management experience, especially for those who work in smaller libraries without middle management positions. However, it may not be possible for faculty to participate in professional service without institutional funding. While there is no requirement for professional service as part of the tenure and promotion process at the college where I work, I do look for ways to encourage and support my colleagues who are interested in getting involved with professional organizations. Participation in local and regional associations requires less travel funding, as does virtual participation, and we can make space for professional service within the balance of other service commitments and job responsibilities.

It is also imperative for me to understand that participation in professional service can carry the real risk of harm for my colleagues of color, who may encounter racist, sexist, and other discriminatory and harassing actions in those spaces. While the potential for harm is not new, several notable incidents in recent years have brought increased exposure to this potential. The American Library Association (ALA) issued a memo in the immediate aftermath of the 2016 election—since redacted—that offered to work with the incoming administration on common goals, drawing wide outrage and disagreement from academic and other librarians for its seeming support for an agenda of intolerance and discrimination of marginalized groups.²⁶ Reports of racist and sexist harassment at meetings

25 Cassandra M. Guarino and Victor M. H. Borden, “Faculty Service Loads and Gender: Are Women Taking Care of the Academic Family?,” *Research in Higher Education* 58, no. 6 (2017): 673.

26 Sarah Houghton, “Open Letter to ALA President Julie Todaro re: Recent ALA Statements,” *Librarian in Black*, November 20, 2016, <http://librarianinblack.net/librarianinblack/alastatements/>.

of our professional associations have also demonstrated that these service commitments may burden librarians of color disproportionately to white librarians.²⁷ Librarians have used the hashtag #NotMyALA²⁸ to discuss these concerns on social media, as well. As a library director it is critical that I stay aware of these issues with professional service work, believe and support my colleagues, and actively intervene when necessary.

Foremost in my mind when considering service with my colleagues is workload. Since librarianship is a service profession, I would argue that the possibilities for overcommitting to service as an academic librarian are greater than for other faculty. We use a department service framework for much of the collaborative work in our library, in part to ensure that library faculty can describe our work on annual reports in terms that are comparable to faculty in other departments. To the extent that it is possible for me to use the power I have as director to ensure that my colleagues participate in meaningful service at all levels, in which they both have an interest and can make a contribution, and to protect them from less useful or excessively time-consuming commitments, I do. At the department level, for example, we rotate the necessary though often somewhat thankless role of department secretary on an annual basis, to ensure that no one is tasked with taking meeting minutes eternally. At the college level, we maintain a list of all library faculty service to the college, which serves both to collaboratively keep track of our service outside the library and make it easier to rotate service commitments to ensure that all library faculty have the opportunity for college service without taking on an excessive service load.

In guiding and mentoring my colleagues as they take on institutional service and balance that work with their other responsibilities, my goal is always to create an environment that enables my colleagues to meet their goals. We discuss service both as we meet throughout the year and during annual evaluations, and I encourage my colleagues to increase or decrease their service commitments depending on where they are on the tenure and promotion track, using the knowledge I have gained about the role service plays in tenure and promotion for faculty across the college. As mentioned above, I was given the opportunity fairly early in my tenure track to take on a major college service commitment, and I try to ensure

27 Lindsay McKenzie, "Racism and the American Library Association," *Inside Higher Ed*, February 1, 2019, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/02/01/american-library-association-criticized-response-racism-complaint>.

28 "#NotMyALA," Twitter, accessed June 7, 2019, <https://twitter.com/search?f=tweets&vertical=default&q=%23NotMyALA>.

that my colleagues have these opportunities as well, if they want them. We also consider each librarian's career goals more broadly. For library faculty the tenure track and subsequent promotions in faculty rank is its own path, but it is not the only path an academic librarian might follow. Sustained service on college and university committees, and especially assuming a leadership role, is an ideal way for academic librarians to learn practical information about management and the institution, and can help prepare for future leadership or administrative positions within and beyond our college.

Ideally, my goal is to use our service—my own and my colleagues'—to resist the hierarchies that constrain library faculty by exploiting the service focus of our profession. The institutionalized racism and sexism of the academy make service problematic for people of color, white women, and those of other marginalized identities. Resisting the burdens of service, especially for those who are traditionally overburdened, can help empower library faculty to advance in their careers. In considering the power I have as a library director, I try to maintain focus on how we make meaning from and resist hierarchies in our service work, and how this work can increase opportunities for us all to build fulfilling careers.

Resisting Hierarchies and Moving Forward

Striving for meaningful, manageable service commitments as and for academic librarians is not the panacea for all of the service disparities that afflict librarianship and academia. However, in striving for empowerment in service, we can make progress in navigating this tension to make sure that service advantages us—as people who are invested in our own career progression, as librarians, and as members of our college or university community—as it also does the institution.

Alongside our efforts to make service meaningful for ourselves and our libraries, we can also advocate for transformation in academic service work more broadly, both in the definitions of service as well as the rewards that accrue for doing this work.²⁹ As others have noted, service activities traditionally have trailed in prestige behind research and scholarship; the former is usually collaborative, while the latter often results in individual rewards. This tension affects faculty across the disciplines, not just academic librarians. What would it look like to heed Shirazi's call to "join our colleagues who are struggling with the narrow system of rewards that

29 Katie Hogan, "Managing Service Duties," *Inside Higher Ed*, January 8, 2010.

favors individual research over (collaborative) service work. The same system in which women, people of color, and queer scholars disproportionately shoulder the burden of committee work, community building, and ‘service work’ that reproduces the academy”?³⁰

We—and especially library directors, deans, or other administrators—should also be mindful to seek out opportunities for making service more equitable and meaningful for our colleagues. Others have suggested the same for higher education administrators more broadly, that they must work to change the culture of academia to ensure that service work is rewarded in the tenure and promotion process.³¹ Administrators and supervisors can keep track of service commitments to distribute them more equitably between women and men, and mentoring efforts can provide women with the encouragement to decline excessive service requests.³² Similar efforts are required in support of our colleagues of color, and directors must “emphasize the value of the work of library faculty of color who engage with and provide service to communities of color served by their institutions.”³³

Returning to the metaphor of the three-legged stool, we should add personal identity as academic librarians as a fourth leg, to construct a table. I endeavor to bring my feminist values into my leadership work, most importantly transparency and equity, in support of my colleagues’ bringing their identities into their service work. By acknowledging and incorporating personal identity into our service, my colleagues and I can make our service work more meaningful and empowering, for our own benefit and to benefit our community. A table is more structurally stable than a stool, and in thinking of how service can move us all forward I aim to enable the conditions for my colleagues and I to have a solid foundation for us to build on in our academic library careers.

30 Shirazi, “Reproducing the Academy.”

31 Misra, Holmes, and Agiomavritis, “The Ivory Ceiling”; Alexis Pauline Gumbs, “Laboring Positions: Black Women, Mothering and the Academy (A Conversation with Editor Sekile Nzinga-Johnson),” *The Feminist Wire*, October 15, 2013.

32 Pyke, “Service and Gender Inequity,” 87; Lise Vesterlund, Linda Babcock, Maria Recalde, and Laurie Weingart, “Breaking the Glass Ceiling with ‘No’: Gender Differences in Accepting and Receiving Requests for Non-Promotable Tasks,” Working Paper. Department of Economics, University of Pittsburgh, January 2015; Guarino and Borden, “Faculty Service Loads and Gender.”

33 Damasco and Hodges, “Tenure and Promotion Experiences,” 300.

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