

Creating an Annual Evaluation Framework for Library Faculty

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Abstract:

This article describes the faculty-lead process and outcomes of a collaborative annual library faculty evaluation project. The authors share the process used at Boise State University's Albertsons Library, including the drivers, team member roles, communication strategies, challenges, discoveries, revision process, evaluation criteria, and the implemented framework. One key discovery is that while library faculty seek the clarity and transparency that a framework can provide in the evaluation process, they often favor differing evaluation criteria, thereby necessitating a structured yet flexible framework. The personal nature of assessing one's work made it an emotional process requiring sensitivity; and while evaluations can never be fully objective, faculty highly value consistent implementation. These findings add complexity to the process of creating a faculty evaluation framework suitable for everyone's needs. There is little scientific research in library sciences on this topic, and much of it is not current. As a result, the library faculty intend to continue to evaluate this process over time.

Keywords: performance review, faculty evaluation, change management, performance assessment

THE NEED FOR A TASK FORCE AND A FRAMEWORK

Background

Librarians at Boise State are tenure-eligible and have the opportunity to progress through three faculty ranks: Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Full Professor. In most cases, librarians are hired as Assistant Professors and go through a six-year pre-tenure process dictated by the library's tenure and promotion guidelines. Additionally, all librarians, regardless of where they are in the tenure or promotion process, participate in an annual evaluation process which results in a narrative report written by their direct supervisor. Although not part of the tenure and promotion process, the annual evaluations do become part of a librarian's employment record and therefore are also included in a librarian's tenure and promotion application. In addition, at Boise State each college has its own tenure and promotion guidelines, which align with Boise State's campus T&P guidelines. The guidelines for library faculty are similar to those across

campus with the key difference that library faculty have “librarianship” as a category for tenure, while faculty in most other colleges have “teaching” as a primary category.

All librarians participate in monthly meetings to discuss issues pertinent to library faculty. In April 2018, librarians held their monthly faculty meeting; at this meeting, several policy questions were on the agenda, including tenure and workload. The library’s faculty senator, who also leads the monthly librarians’ meeting, facilitated a discussion on the annual evaluation process. Prior to this conversation, there had been a growing dissatisfaction among tenure-track and tenured library faculty regarding the confusion and lack of information that was available to guide the annual evaluation process. Faculty noted that the absence of written guidelines created confusion and perceived unfair variation in how annual evaluations were conducted. Some of this confusion was due to multiple changes in supervisors over the previous few years.

Historically, the policies at the Library required librarians to submit to their supervisor a current CV, self-evaluation, and job description annually. At the time of the library faculty discussion, the only guidelines provided to librarians and supervisors were template documents for both the employee and supervisor that included brief definitions of librarianship, scholarship, and service. The Library Dean created these definitions with the then-supervisors. Although based on the tenure guidelines, the template documents did not specifically correspond to the tenure guidelines and were not developed with faculty input. The template also included a three-tier rating system which supervisors used to assess performance as a part of the evaluation process. In addition, the evaluation included a section on shared faculty librarian values. However, the values were created in a similar top-down manner and did not go through a consensus-building process. Because there was not a shared understanding of the values and how they applied to a librarian’s work, it was difficult to meaningfully integrate them as an evaluation criteria.

While the templates were useful in providing some structure that librarians and supervisors could follow, other issues created dissatisfaction with the annual evaluation process, specifically a lack of consistent standards applied to all librarians. There was no written process for performing the annual evaluation, so supervisors used their personal guidelines and processes to complete the evaluations. They were not provided training or guidance for creating the evaluations, and there was no opportunity to build consensus among supervisors regarding evaluating performance. This led to supervisors assigning different ratings for similar work performance across varying units.

Although the stated purpose of the annual evaluation process was to provide meaningful feedback on a librarian’s performance, it served other purposes as well. Per university tenure policy, the supervisor’s annual evaluation of the employee was submitted as part of the tenure application. However, the evaluations were not in fact evaluative because of the lack of

standardized performance measures. Rather, most evaluations tended to be descriptive, detailing the work that the librarian had undertaken during the evaluation period. If the evaluation included feedback, it was often limited due to the potential long-term impact a negative review could have on a librarian's tenure application. As a state-funded institution, Boise State's raises are based on merit and across-the-board increases approved by the state legislature. Merit-based increases are based on evaluation performance, and in many cases are the only way a faculty member can obtain a raise besides promotion. Using the assigned rating, the Dean determined percentage increases for each faculty member. However, since the evaluation rating system only had three levels, there was minimal difference in percentage increases.

When librarians began discussing the lack of policy and documentation during the April 2018 meeting, the faculty senator worked with other library faculty to propose a task force with deliverables, outputs, and goals. Since there was already a process for developing tenure guidelines and procedures, and the Dean had begun developing a draft workload policy, the librarians agreed to focus on annual evaluations. To do this, a task force was suggested (hereafter referred to as the "Task Force"), and the faculty senator took on the responsibility of forming the group and developing a charge. The Associate Dean also joined since she was responsible for implementing the annual evaluation process and would provide an administrative perspective.

Literature Review

Academic libraries have long struggled to properly assess the work of individual librarians. Librarians in higher education work in many contexts depending on the functions they serve as well as the specialties they deliver. This can vary from providing instruction or reference services to crafting data management plans to cataloging. These very different areas of content expertise can make the administrative task of ranking performance through comparative evaluation very difficult. Since evaluations are often tied to compensation, as well as tenure and promotion or rank, these evaluations are crucial for librarian performance, despite being seemingly subjective.

With no standardized performance assessment among various work areas, a one-size-fits all solution doesn't work. In addition, librarians in higher education can be faculty or professional staff. Some professional staff librarians have ranking systems (such as Librarian I, II, III, etc.) and some do not. Even among those designated as tenure-eligible or tenured faculty, there are differences in faculty work expectations. Are librarians practitioners? Are they delivering a service model and responsible for faculty-level research? Or something else? With all of these differences in mind, how do academic librarians measure success?

With these questions in mind, the Task Force researched the current status of performance appraisal in higher education libraries and sought to develop an equitable process for this task. When consulting the literature on this topic, librarians must consider other areas of variance: whether an institution is public or private, and whether or not a union is involved in the performance management process.

In our environmental scan, the Task Force did not find evaluation instruments being used in academic libraries. Task Force members were able to find working documents from some institutions, though the characteristics of those institutions differ. The Task Force located working documents from private universities, from public institutions with librarians as staff, and from a public institution with library faculty. What follows is our literature review results and an environmental scan.

Historically, reference librarians were evaluated on whether or not they provided correct answers to reference questions (Weech, 1984). This is no longer the basis for evaluating librarians in the current digital era of online search engines. This metric is also not applicable when evaluating the work of librarians whose jobs require creating new information.

An excellent introduction to the purpose behind performance evaluations is Williams and Edwards's 1998 article:

Performance appraisals are implemented to provide specific documentation regarding current and future personnel actions such as promotions, salary increases, staff development opportunities, and disciplinary action that may be required to correct problematic situations.

They also note that the literature on this topic is sparse and that much of it is focused on administration. When a process is adopted, they state that those implementing the performance appraisal have been "shortsighted and negligent in their attempts to be more objective in developing stronger performance appraisal programmes because of the lack of administrative support." Edwards and Williams also found that the processes for evaluation are not useful as they lack in-depth rubrics or resources, stating that "what little information exists depicts the process very superficially."

Stilling, et. al. conducted a study in 2013 surveying librarians in academic libraries on the current status of performance evaluations and published the results in 2018. It remains a critical assessment because "a national survey on this topic and with this population had not been conducted for 25 years." They remark that there is much anxiety surrounding the performance evaluation process, stating: "Both employees and managers dread it. One source of this dread is

the complexity of giving and receiving feedback.” This claim is also supported by Crawford, et. al. (2015) who report that there is some fear of a negative appraisal among librarians. They state that by raising awareness of the anxiety associated with the performance evaluation process, libraries can lessen the fear librarians may feel.

Mills provides some clarity on the process, offering the suggestion of a rubric in “Advances in Library Administration and Organizations” (2016). This proposed rubric was intended for use in a variety of administrative contexts, though it was developed specifically for Robert Morris University (RMU) as part of its bargaining and evaluation agreements. Mills suggests that the administration should share this rubric in advance so that “the rubric establishes a mutually-known basis for evaluation.” While this rubric proves to be an effective tool, the specifics of the rubric as published are still too broad and rely on an equitable distribution of projects and workload, presuming that all workers have an equal, comparable workload. Mills states, “This rubric is only a proposal, one based upon the specific situation of RMU Librarianship portfolio was developed.” Mills further explains that other libraries could adapt this rubric for their own work, a process which the Task Force agrees with.

Evans and Rugaas in the *Journal of Library Administration* (1982) describe why libraries must continually evolve to effectively meet demands; libraries have the same shared goals of delivering content and improving information literacy. They argue that performance appraisal may enhance individual librarians’ growth. They point out that “formal performance appraisals should have a direct positive relationship to productivity: the closer the monitoring and greater the feedback on performance, the higher productivity should be. Such does not seem to be the case.” They call for more research in these areas, suggesting that management-heavy performance appraisal may not produce the desired results. The Task Force applied a grassroots model with administrative support to attempt a successful feedback loop, though the rubric and process still need to be tested and evaluated for validity.

Much of what Person wrote in 1982 regarding performance evaluation in academic libraries remains true today. Person argues that peer evaluation must be included in the process of evaluating the faculty and that too much weight is placed upon management to use evaluations to prove that the library is delivering positive results. The peer evaluation process may introduce bias and additional subjectivity, however, which Person does not account for. Person suggests that faculty evaluation is a process that could lead to an elevated understanding of the profession itself through the inclusion of peer evaluations and patron evaluations. In Person’s article, a rubric is also suggested for faculty at Southern Illinois University to help enhance an individual’s understanding of their own development as it matches the institutional needs. This development, when combined with evaluation, can lead to greater successes in the organization. The article states:

Such improvement would increase the value of any library or university's human resources. In addition, it would make each faculty member more aware of the talents and skills of others and perhaps increase cooperation among all faculty. Most importantly, it would provide a mechanism for encouraging all individuals to develop their own potential with the help and encouragement of their peers and those they serve.

There are limits to peer evaluations, and, as such, peers must focus their evaluations on the topics of librarianship, teaching, services, and scholarly research—and not other areas such as collegiality or civility. Assessing a librarian on the criteria of collegiality brings about high levels of subjectivity which can negatively influence their own development, growth, and achievements. The American Association of University Professors (2017) published an article regarding this type of peer evaluation and stated that the use of civility as an evaluative criterion is too subjective, stating “we view this development as highly unfortunate, and we believe that it should be discouraged.”

Additionally, subjective views related to race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, and other traits can negatively affect librarians evaluations. Below we explore some of the literature to explain how the conditions can impact the evaluation, and how important it is to reduce subjectivity in performance evaluations. Improving performance metrics and reducing subjectivity as much as possible can reduce unwanted bias.

Damasco and Hodges's 2012 article published in *College and Research Libraries*, “Tenure and Promotion Experiences of Academic Librarians of Color,” thoroughly examined race in performance evaluations, tenure, and promotion in academic libraries. They studied faculty librarians of color regarding retention issues. Though librarians and the American Library Association have been grappling with a lack of diversity since the 1920s, library faculty of color are still decreasing in number: “the total number of degreed African American and Latino librarians under the age of 45 decreased between 1990 and 2000 despite recruitment efforts.” Tying recruitment and retention to the experience, Damasco and Hodges point out that the criteria for evaluation, and what is deemed productive, differs and that there is no clear understanding of what that means in the library and information field. They cite a case study that identified factors contributing to productivity which includes, “previous formal research training, collegial support through formal and informal mentoring, and the overall collegial climate—funding availability for research travel, individually negotiated release time for research, and the sense that all research agendas are valued.” Faculty of color at these institutions face different productivity expectations and are forced to meet these expectations in different ways: “Faculty of color more frequently find themselves burdened with teaching loads and service responsibilities that may detract from their research activity, research that may already be

undervalued by their colleagues." In their study, Damasco and Hodges surveyed faculty of color in an effort to determine how much support they received and to assess how climate, mentorship, and racial insensitivity affect their work. Workload issues impact evaluation and tenure and promotion assessments, including being assigned to do diversity and equity work, even if such work is not a research area for that faculty. One key area to consider is how the climate of the library contributes to one's productivity.

Based on their research, Damasco and Hodges make several recommendations that can also be applied to annual evaluations. One critical process is to periodically evaluate policies to ensure they are equitable and transparent. Initiatives intended to support junior faculty should be evaluated and assessed often "to ensure such programs are actually effective." In addition, Damasco and Hodges recommend offering faculty of color specific skill-building initiatives that would "benefit both the library as well as the individual faculty member." Finally they suggest working with communities of color within their organization. Regarding evaluation, they also state that "library faculty of color must find ways to demonstrate the value of such work within an academic context, and library administrators must actively appraise and promote diversity research, service, and programming within the larger organizational culture."

In Alabi's work, "From hostile to inclusive: Strategies for improving the racial climate of academic libraries" published in *Library Trends*, the author finds that, despite efforts in the field, librarians have not been successful at "increasing the number of racial/ethnic minorities in the profession, especially in academic libraries." Alabi's work makes recommendations for White librarians to take on a responsibility to "prevent and address racial microaggressions in order to become better allies to our colleagues of color." This includes addressing how evaluation criteria are applied. Since the 1990s, Alabi found that library researchers have noted that there are two sets of standards, that is, that librarians of color "need to be twice as good or to work twice as hard as White counterparts." This inequality is due to different standards and different workload. Evaluating workload is one way to make evaluations more equitable. Librarians of color, Alabi says, are often treated differently and may not get the same kinds of opportunities as White colleagues.

Payne's article *Administration, Emotional Labor, and Gendered Discourses of Power: A Feminist Chair's Mission to Make Service Matter* illustrates how workload assignments and perceptions, without clear guidelines, can adversely affect faculty evaluations. Working conditions affect individuals along gender lines, in addition to racial and ethnic lines. Workload can be an issue for women, which can negatively impact evaluation. Administrative service, such as taking on leadership roles like chair or department head, may entail emotional labor obligations that are often unseen and not recognized in evaluations. Emotional labor and its concomitant

expectations are frequently gendered. Payne suggests that assessing and evaluating service is critically important for the objective analysis of faculty evaluations,

Evaluating and rewarding service, however, requires that faculty members develop institutional literacy—an understanding of the discourses, processes, and power relationships within a university—and that ‘literacy sponsors’ in the workplace—that is, supervisors and administrators—support that development.

As a result, evaluation criteria should acknowledge and discuss this possibility and try to provide an evaluation that accounts for these issues. Bias may not be overt; it may occur subtly through the way different kinds of labor are, or are not, acknowledged.

Examples Used

In addition to reviewing the literature, the Task Force sought examples of evaluation practices from other institutions, which included referring to standards and policies in place at Boise State at both the college- and department-level. The Task Force also reviewed other academic libraries and their policies, primarily from public institutions where library faculty are tenure-eligible or tenured. In particular, the Task Force gathered any and all evaluation documents that included criteria for which librarians had been evaluated in the past, or criteria they believed should be used in the future.

The Task Force found the Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) Libraries Faculty Handbook to have a very helpful framework. Their library faculty guidelines contained a rubric that provided standards and examples of performance for each of the four rating classifications: Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, Excellent, and Exceptional Achievement. The Task Force felt this model was especially effective as it not only described expectations but also illustrated work that would not meet expectations. Based on this, the Task Force decided to focus their efforts on developing an evaluation framework. (Originally the Task Force used the term “rubric” when naming the original resulting document, which was later changed to “framework.”)

CREATING THE FRAMEWORK

Formation of the Task Force

Once the library faculty decided to form a Task Force to address the annual evaluation process, the faculty senator developed a charge and sent out an open call for volunteers. Two librarians

volunteered because of their interest in the topic and past experiences with the evaluation process. To identify additional members the faculty senator spoke individually with various librarians and was intentional about encouraging people who would bring a variety of perspectives and strengths. This included ensuring that the Task Force included:

1. Tenured and tenure-eligible faculty
2. Library faculty from multiple departments
3. One member of library administration (the Associate Dean)

When an original tenure-eligible faculty left Boise State, another tenure-eligible librarian replaced her on the Task Force. The perspective of tenure-eligible faculty was especially important because annual evaluations are included in tenure applications and have the potential to affect long-term employment. Although the group did not establish formal meeting norms, members had frank discussions while making certain to address the particular concerns of the stakeholders represented in the Task Force. This approach helped encourage the open sharing of ideas.

At Boise State, the administration of each academic group (i.e. colleges or libraries) is responsible for administering annual evaluations and ensuring the rigor of the process. Boise State policy (Boise State University, 2019) mandates, however, that developing evaluation criteria must be a shared responsibility involving both faculty and administrators. Because of this shared obligation and due to their specific assignment to implement the evaluation process, the Associate Dean joined the Task Force as a participating member.

Although a shared process should consider both the needs of the individual and the organization, it was important that the Associate Dean not chair the Task Force. Because of the authority already vested in library administration positions, it would be too easy for only the needs of the organization to be heard, resulting in a top-down mandate. Given that the frustration over the lack of consistency led to the creation of the Task Force, such a mandate would most likely not be respected or adopted by faculty. Instead, the Associate Dean worked collaboratively with the other members of the Task Force helping to build consensus around performance expectations.

While serving on the group, the Associate Dean took on the responsibility of representing the needs of the organization during conversations. Because of her specific responsibilities for initiating the annual evaluation process, she also tried to articulate how the review criteria and resulting expectations could be incorporated into the annual process. Because the Associate Dean was in frequent contact with the Dean, she was also able to help anticipate when there may be resistance from the Dean or other university administrators, which helped smooth the path to adoption. Another benefit of administration involvement was coverage from negative feedback

when unpopular ideas were presented, such as fielding concerns from some librarians that the new standards were excessive. As the Task Force began to share the results of their efforts with the rest of the library faculty, the Associate Dean assumed certain responsibilities, such as helping build consensus among the faculty on implementing the new framework and also responding to faculty concerns that were outside the scope of the Task Force.

Mitigating Resistance through Change Management

Due to the sensitive nature of this project, Task Force members quickly acknowledged that librarians might resist adopting the new framework. To reduce opposition, the Task Force used several strategies to create opportunities for feedback and possible revisions.

Since this was the first time that the library had attempted to define and articulate performance standards for each of the three areas of evaluation (librarianship, service, and scholarship), the Task Force held meetings over several months to create a firm development strategy and reach consensus on underlying assumptions, which will be discussed further below. Once consensus was reached, the group reported its progress during a regular librarians' meeting. Later, when a complete draft of the framework was ready, the Task Force hosted a second open forum. These group meetings allowed all faculty librarians an opportunity to offer feedback to the Task Force and discuss concerns.

Knowing that not all librarians would feel comfortable voicing their opinions openly in group meetings, the Task Force created an anonymous feedback form to solicit comments on the framework. To ensure the task force addressed all comments and gave fair consideration to them, comments were split among Task Force members, who then reviewed them and provided a written response to every single piece of feedback; when appropriate, we incorporated the feedback into the framework by changing specific language or the examples used. These written responses were then shared with the larger faculty body so that everyone could learn why we incorporated some feedback but not others. Although Task Force members were able to respond to the majority of comments, there were some issues that either went beyond the scope of the project or that the Task Force lacked authority to address. In those cases, the Associate Dean took the lead by either providing a reply from the administration or explaining why the Task Force would not be addressing the issue. Providing replies to all issues raised in the feedback form helped explain why the Task Force had made a certain decision and tried to assure librarians that their opinions had been heard.

Another issue that the Task Force had to wrestle with was librarian feedback that often seemed harsh and unfiltered. To minimize personal hurt and professional vulnerability, the Task Force

decided to communicate, whenever possible, as a group instead of as a single individual. Periodically, however, after discussing it with the chair of the Task Force, the Associate Dean would take the lead in communicating with the larger group of librarians. This strategy was valuable when it needed to be made clear that the next steps in the project would be required of the entire faculty body.

At other points in the discussion with the librarians, it became clear that consensus could not be reached. In particular, there was significant disagreement about how to value scholarship in terms of performance assessment, specifically over the weight of peer-reviewed vs. non-peer-reviewed articles and open access vs. non-open access journals. Librarians decided that a deeper review of current literature and analysis of the issues would be needed. Due to the need for longer conversations, the Task Force declined to take on that work, and instead, a second group was set up to research scholarship separately from the Task Force.

Finally, recognizing that some librarians would not be comfortable with any changes, the Task Force repeatedly communicated that developing a new framework was an iterative process and that discussion of needed revisions would be encouraged once the framework was implemented. During the first year, librarians would use the framework to complete their self-evaluation, assessing their own performance based on the criteria provided. However, the supervisors would continue to use the established three-tiered rating system and only discuss the librarian's performance based on the framework. After this “trial run,” the Task Force agreed to solicit anonymous feedback a second time and make any needed revisions before the complete implementation the following year. Recognizing the emotions experienced during the evaluation process, the Task Force demonstrated sensitivity towards all librarians’ feedback and focused on making the framework fair and flexible.

Supplementing the Framework: Adding an “Assumptions” Section

It was important to our Task Force to make certain that all librarians and supervisors approached the evaluation process in a similar way. To ensure this, the Task Force incorporated an “assumptions” section, which preceded the framework, to protect both the librarians as well as the supervisors by clarifying that the burden of successful job performance was neither the sole responsibility of the librarian nor of the supervisor. The assumptions are listed below along with specific rationales for each:

1. The responsibilities of individual librarians vary considerably, which is a strength of the libraries, one that allows for the development of significant in-depth expertise in very specialized fields. The framework cannot capture every activity of every librarian so this

document should not be treated as a checklist. Librarians make their case for the impact of their work and supervisors will use their judgment when evaluating that work.

Rationale: The framework is intended to be descriptive, not prescriptive, so this point reiterates that the framework is not exhaustive in its examples and that the substance of each librarians' evaluation will vary.

2. The evaluation process explicitly references the previous years' job description, annual evaluation/goals, and workload percentages that were agreed upon by the employee and the supervisor, and approved by the Library Dean.

Rationale: This clearly enumerates the measure by which the librarian will be evaluated.

3. Job descriptions and workload percentages are reassessed annually and revised as needed with consideration for institutional needs and current library trends, and should reflect a standard of updated professional competencies.

Rationale: This ensures that the librarian is being evaluated by what their job currently is and is not outdated.

4. Some activities may fit under multiple categories; the category under which such activities will be evaluated is agreed upon by the employee and the supervisor.

Rationale: At times, there has been great confusion about what activity falls under which of the three categories (librarianship, scholarship, and service). The Task Force's contention is that there is no one right answer. Instead, a librarian simply needs to make an argument for why an activity falls into a certain category and discuss it with their supervisor.

5. The evaluation process, and related documentation, is intended to be mutually informed by, and supporting, the tenure and promotion process.

Rationale: The tenure and promotion process is separate from the evaluation process, yet annual evaluations are an integral part of tenure and promotion.

6. Three categories (Does not meet expectations, Meets expectations, and Exceeds expectations) results in too broad of a range of performance in the Meets Expectations category. Adding two additional rating categories will allow for greater distinction of effort.

Rationale: Our previous rating scale only had three possible rankings. Increasing that number to five allows librarians' performances to be better parsed.

7. The Annual Evaluation should not be the first time a librarian learns something negative about their performance. It is the responsibility of the librarian to review and fully understand the performance expectations of their position and to seek out feedback and guidance as needed, and it is the responsibility of the supervisor to address issues as they arise.

Rationale: Librarians should be working to improve and/or correct their performance throughout the year. Negative performance characteristics should be addressed as quickly as possible and not simply once a year during the evaluation.

8. Because of the emphasis on national and international recognition in University Tenure & Promotion Policy 4340, as well as the Library's Full Professor Tenure & Promotion, service activities with a national or international scope are given more weight in the framework.

Rationale: This reiterates the standards of the tenure and promotion policy.

9. Ratings do affect raises but other factors include available budget, compression, and/or allocation guidelines or requirements provided by the state or university.

Rationale: This indicates the importance of the evaluation as well as its practical implications.

10. Unsatisfactory and Exceptional categories are reserved for rare occasions.

Rationale: This indicates to supervisors (and librarians) that the uppermost and lowermost categories should be awarded lightly. A problem with the former three-category system was the perception of disparate awarding of "Exceeds Expectations" between supervisors. (In other words, to borrow a phrase, some supervisors used "grade inflation," while others did not.)

Aligning the Framework with University Policies

According to Boise State policy (Boise State University, 2019), every faculty member must be reviewed annually. As the policy notes, "Evaluation of performance is an important component of faculty development and personnel actions such as reappointment, non-appointment, granting promotion and/or tenure, salary determination, and other personnel actions." Our Task Force had

to make sure that the library's framework and evaluation process fit within the wider university policy.

The university policy gives wide latitude to each department and college to set their own evaluation process, stating: "[The Library] must establish criteria for evaluating faculty within the general categories of teaching, scholarly/creative/research activities, and service." Importantly, the policy also notes that "such criteria must recognize variations among disciplines and departments, and the different expectations for the Library with respect to faculty performance. The relative importance of the various criteria may change over time according to college or Library goals." The Albertsons Library's new framework aligns with the University policy by offering descriptive, rather than prescriptive, examples of the types of work and activities within each of the three evaluation categories. Maintaining flexibility in the framework is key to its long-term success as well as the reality of shifting library and university goals.

OUTCOMES

How We Decided We Were Done

Meeting the charge of the Task Force was a surprisingly difficult and lengthy process. After numerous rounds of soliciting and incorporating feedback from library faculty, and months of meetings with detailed discussions about each part of the framework, the Task Force was quite satisfied with some sections of the evaluation framework but still not completely happy with other parts. And yet we knew that: 1. We would never reach total agreement about all aspects of the framework, and 2. Further revisions would be needed over time and as library faculty used the new process, and 3. It was important to move forward. Once we began receiving the same criticisms and feedback that we had already addressed, and once our meetings began to circle around the same few points without creating any new ideas, the entire Task Force agreed that it was time to finish the evaluation framework for the time being. We were well aware that the framework was still not perfect, but we decided that the best feedback would now come from library faculty actually using the framework to guide their annual evaluations. We fully expect to reassess and potentially revise the framework once they have been in use, especially since a separate group is working to refine further the scholarship portion.

Strengths, Struggles, and Solutions

In reflecting on the process, Task Force members noted several strengths, including:

1. Ensuring a variety of perspectives on the Task Force and in the framework creation, and
2. Using an iterative feedback process, and

3. Producing a practical tool for both supervisors and supervisees.

In many ways, the strengths of the process were a result of discussion and compromise around the struggles that the Task Force encountered while creating the evaluation framework. As discussed throughout the article, struggles included representing the various types of work that library faculty do; building consensus on the framework's content; aligning the evaluation framework with the tenure and promotion guidelines; balancing qualitative and quantitative criteria; respecting the feelings and emotions involved in performance evaluation; and responding to library faculty resistance to implementing the framework. Working through these challenges allowed the Task Force to create solutions that addressed the primary goal of making the annual evaluation process more transparent, objective, and consistent in its application.

As stated earlier, the Task Force was carefully formed and members deliberately selected: it included both tenured and tenure-eligible faculty members; members came from several different units within the library, and the Task Force included one member of library administration. In addition, the Task Force found rubrics and relevant articles from other universities and incorporated pieces of them into the framework, further ensuring the resulting framework would be useful to librarians whose job duties, scholarship, and service activities varied widely.

The iterative process of gathering feedback from librarians during and after the creation of the framework led to the continuous improvement of the framework. In the end, the framework contained examples of a variety of librarian activities, and a balance of quantitative and qualitative indicators of impact.

Making steady progress and moving the work forward, while always taking time to deliberate and discuss, was another key to ensuring the success of developing an evaluation framework. That is to say, we were extremely thoughtful in our decision making and we debated every point, often at great length, while resisting getting bogged down in endless debate without resolution. We set and met deadlines; we had action items at the end of every meeting, and we met them. Even when decisions were difficult to make, we knew that an imperfect decision was better than no decision. Functional teamwork was also a strength of this process. There was a great deal of respect between Task Force members and when we debated and discussed various points, all Task Force members listened carefully and courteously to one another's opinions.

Perhaps our greatest strength as a Task Force was that we were open and transparent about our process and we shared all of our work multiple times along the way with the rest of the library faculty. We recognized that this was a sensitive topic that all library faculty have a vested interest in, so we solicited feedback from library faculty on our drafts several times. Moreover, we didn't merely solicit feedback, we took the time to consider all of it; for every point of feedback we

received, we either incorporated the suggestion, or we responded directly to the feedback with why we were making a different choice. Our hope is that this process made everyone who took the time to give us feedback to feel truly heard.

One significant oversight in this process was how the Task Force did not completely account for bias, especially in terms of how the criteria we developed might be applied to those in traditionally underrepresented identities. This failure can be regarded as a form of microaggression and a part of an organization's culture that opposes different viewpoints which can be particularly impactful on individuals from underrepresented groups.

Broadened Perspectives: How This Experience Changed Our Understanding of the Evaluation Process

One of the most surprising parts of working on the Task Force was how differently each member of the team thought about, and had previously approached, their own evaluations. Without an objective standard to make sure all library faculty were evaluated similarly, each individual supervisor and each faculty member had created their own independent rating criteria and content evaluation tools. As this had been the practice for a great deal of time, individuals believed that they owned their own methods of evaluating themselves. This contributed to a cultural norm where faculty were not discussing important issues of consequence with the rest of the library faculty. Through this process, one of the most significant gains was the ability to use tools and language to communicate and effectively learn to disagree with one another. We learned how to criticize and advocate for ideas while learning how to not take that criticism personally.

Some Task Force members came into the process expecting there to be far more overlap on how we had completed our own self-evaluations in the past and assumed we would easily reach a consensus on how to best move forward. Instead, we learned that each of us had received a wide variety of advice from a number of different people. These varying approaches primarily arose from the fact that Task Force members came from different units in the library, so each of us reported to different unit heads who had conveyed differing advice. In addition, different units may have had different goals or ways of seeing their work. Having such variance among the small Task Force highlighted the need for a common, library-wide understanding of the self-evaluation process—one that we hoped to create through our new framework and evaluation process.

One of the starkest areas of contrast was between what we considered “Librarianship” and what counted as “Service.” One mid-career member of the committee had always understood “Service” to mean service to the profession (e.g. serving on an ACRL committee) or service to

the campus (e.g. serving on the campus Curriculum Council), but that work (or service) *within* the library (e.g. serving on a search committee) counted as “Librarianship.” In contrast, a few other members of the Task Force considered all of the work—both service within the library and to the campus or profession—as “Service.” It was surprising to all of us to find that there was very little consensus about which category most library faculty work belonged in. While it was eye-opening for each of us to learn how differently our co-workers considered their work, we were able to successfully talk through these varying points of view and reach a decision on how to incorporate them into the new framework..

Future of the Boise State Library Faculty Evaluation Framework

To give library faculty time to think through and get a better sense of the new evaluation framework, the Task Force decided to defer implementation of the framework for one full year. We finished the framework in late summer 2019. The plan is for the framework to be used as the official evaluation instrument starting spring 2021 (for evaluation of the calendar year 2020).

Despite not officially utilizing the new framework until 2021, all librarians were asked to look at the framework during the 2020 evaluation cycle (for evaluation of the calendar year 2019) and evaluate themselves using the new framework. Based on their experience using the new framework informally on themselves, the Task Force asked for their feedback. The Associate Dean sent a survey in February 2020 asking for librarian feedback, and again in April 2020 allowing additional feedback from library faculty and reiterating that the Task Force wanted to receive feedback.

In September 2020, some librarians voiced their concerns about the use of the word “rubric” to describe the document the Task Force created, which is how it had been titled since the Task Force decided to create such a document. The concern was that the word carried too much of a connotation of a checklist, which the document is not intended to be. In January 2021, the librarians voted to change the name to the “Faculty Librarian Evaluation Framework.” This motion was adopted, so the document in the appendix and throughout this article bears that name.

After the first official evaluation cycle with the new framework, the Task Force anticipates making additional tweaks and changes to the framework based on feedback from all librarians. This could include broadening or restricting the types of examples we gave under each category or adjusting the procedures or assumptions to best fit the needs of the librarians and their supervisors. In addition, a separate team has formed to do a deeper analysis of best practices for evaluating scholarship. Scholarly activities was a section of the framework that received a lot of feedback and the section in which library faculty had the most differing opinions. The Task

Force anticipates incorporating suggestions from the scholarship group into the official evaluation framework.

DISCUSSION

In reviewing this case study, we found that developing a framework that is built upon contributions from a variety of perspectives strengthens the resulting evaluation tool. However, this diversity of opinion creates a need to use an interactive feedback process and thoughtful change management techniques to ensure the creation of a usable tool. Without consistent evaluation criteria for all supervisors and librarians, frustration can build as each individual develops their own understanding of performance expectations. We also found that although it is possible to reach a point where the initial development work is considered finished, libraries should recognize that ongoing work will be needed and in fact is valuable to further refine and evolve the process of performance assessment. This iterative and developmental approach is beneficial as it mirrors the developmental perspective that we hope our librarians will adopt for themselves.

With the substantial deficit of empirical research or even descriptive literature in this area, the academic library profession lacks an important competency needed to advance the field. As a whole, academic libraries truly do not know how to accurately and effectively assess librarian performance. In addition to helping highlight this important information gap, this case study also describes key components, such as the anxiety created through the process, that influence the success and satisfaction of the evaluation process. This case study also helps advance the body of knowledge in this area by going beyond the technical elements and business purposes of performance appraisals as described by Williams and Edwards. Because the Task Force thoughtfully wrestled with the unique perspectives individuals bring to the evaluation process, we were able to make definitive statements on how decisions that previously would have been contentious, should be addressed. With the development of the Assumptions section of the framework, we created clear common ground between the employee and supervisor. Recognizing the importance of building a shared understanding of the actual process was also essential for ensuring fair, consistent evaluation.

This work also helps address the challenges Stilling, et al. raised by discussing the emotional element of the performance appraisal process by emphasizing the use of different opinions, including the participation of administrators in the development process. Additionally, the personal and emotional context of the evaluation process exacerbates differences of opinions about performance which can not be quickly or easily resolved when there is a lack of structure. With the establishment of objective criteria, both the librarian and supervisor can evaluate the

librarian's performance and then share their rating of that performance along with their explanation for that rating. It helps move both parties away from self-serving objectives and personal bias and towards more fair and thoughtful discussions.

A limitation regarding this work is that it does not use empirical research methods to assess our findings. The lack of scientific research on the topic of librarian evaluation throughout the professional literature is a concerning problem. We encourage other researchers to consider using scientific research to determine the efficacy of the evaluation process described. We also recommend including other groups to test the impact and value of performance assessment practices. Researchers should also consider expanding upon the evaluation process by incorporating peer assessment and stakeholder feedback.

Finally, we urge libraries to go beyond evaluations to identify other areas where a lack of needed structure and objective criteria results in confusion and frustration among participants. The strengths highlighted in this article can serve as a starting point for others to develop their own iterative and inclusive processes.

Conclusion

This case study introduces a collaborative, iterative process for creating a framework for the annual evaluation of a faculty librarian's activities. It is intended to be developmental for academic libraries to build upon this work and improve their evaluation processes in their institutions. We encourage greater research in this area, especially encouraging scientific research to be conducted by library faculty to learn how to best organize evaluation processes. In addition, there is further work to be done on developing evaluation processes that are fair and equitable for all, taking into account gender, race, LGBTQIA+ identity, differing abilities, neurodivergence and/or other underrepresented identities.

As the resulting framework is attuned to one institution's specific process, the authors hope readers will consider adopting a similar process, one involving a variety of stakeholders from the beginning and delicately balancing feedback, emotions, and change management. Originally begun as a way to gain clarity and transparency in the evaluation process, the framework laid bare the fears and emotions inherent in performance evaluation and led to numerous discussions with stakeholders, ultimately resulting in a well-informed framework integrated into the process of assigning value of one's work to the organization. The Task Force highlighted the need for a common, library-wide understanding of the performance evaluation process—one that we hoped to create through our new framework and evaluation process.

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