



Book Review

Review of *Academic Librarian Faculty Status*

Debbi Dinkins, *Stetson University*

ABSTRACT

Review of the book Bailey, Edgar and Becher, Melissa. *Academic Librarian Faculty Status*. Chicago, Illinois: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2022.

KEYWORDS

academic librarians, faculty status, tenure-track librarians, research, professional development

SUGGESTED CITATION

Dinkins, D. (2023). Review of *Academic librarian faculty status*, by E. Bailey and M. Becher. *Journal of New Librarianship*, 8(2), 157–159. <https://doi.org/10.33011/newlibs/14/12>

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.



Academic status for librarians in universities and colleges varies widely and follows no set pattern. Librarians may be classified as tenure-track faculty with very similar policies as teaching faculty for earning tenure and promotion. Conversely, librarians in other academic institutions may have faculty status but do not achieve tenure. Some librarians in academic settings do not have faculty status at all and are considered staff at their institutions. Could there be demographic indicators about which schools are more likely to offer tenure for librarians? The authors of this book, published as part of the College Library Information on Policy and Practice (CLIPP) publishing program of the College Libraries Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) hoped to answer a similar question and the book reports the results of a 2020 survey of librarian status in small to medium-sized academic libraries.

While the authors determined that the completion rate for the survey did not lead to statistically significant data for generalizations about the status of academic librarians, the survey does show interesting information about small and medium-sized libraries, which have not been surveyed widely in previous literature on this question. Demographic data collected from the libraries in categories such as Carnegie class, student FTE, and number of librarians yielded a number of correlations through Chi-Square analysis. School size as a function of student FTE and librarian tenure eligibility showed that a majority of schools with student FTE at 3,001 or greater offered tenure to librarians. Another correlation was found with support staff size where libraries with larger support staff numbers were more likely to offer tenure to librarians.

By using binary logistic regression, the authors found that the institutions tax status (indicating a private or public institution) was a significant predictor of librarians being given the opportunity to earn tenure. However, tax status was a much stronger predictor for those institutions not offering tenure. The model constructed predicted schools offering tenure around 30% of the time while schools not offering tenure to libraries were predicted around 94% of the time.

The book offers a wealth of information on survey results on the ACRL Standards for Faculty Status for Academic Librarians. The survey asked librarians whether they were asked to comply with each ACRL standard. It is no surprise that, of the full-time tenured library faculty responding, 100% responded that they were eligible to be a part of college governance such as serving and chairing university committees. High percentages (90% and above) reported being eligible for promotion in rank and are subject to the same grievance and dismissal policies as teaching faculty at their institution. Over 90% of librarians in this category reported having academic titles such as professor and associate professor. A slightly lower percentage reported being eligible for sabbatical leave. Survey results for non-tenure-track library faculty also showed a high percentage being eligible for college governance with committee work.

While the survey results in this book were fascinating, they were not surprising. Having served as a tenure-track faculty librarian for almost 30 years in a small university, I found myself nodding my head in agreement. What I found most impressive in this book was the extensive literature survey. The authors framed the literature within the last twenty years, but also mentioned seminal articles and studies on tenure and faculty status from previous years, such as W.B. Mitchell's dissertation on librarian faculty status. The thoroughness of the literature survey was notable, and the authors effectively grouped the literature they reviewed by type of work, such as opinion or reaction pieces versus research studies. Continually, the authors framed the literature from the last 20 years in terms of the ACRL Standards for Faculty Status for Academic Librarians and in terms of the publication publishing the article. I recommend the literature review in this book to any scholar researching this subject.

Effective book reviews call for some mention of weakness in the text or methodology. I found none in this book, other than the authors finding their survey results were statistically insignificant, which is not a weakness but a result of chance in the number of respondents. I hope the authors choose to proceed with further study in this area. They mention one area for further study that would be of interest to many in the field. Appropriately crediting DEI-related work as scholarly activity is crucial for academic institutions moving forward and especially important to BIPOC librarians who may be assigned to special initiatives in this area. The authors recognize such practices with BIPOC individuals and other marginalized groups as invisible labor and such assignments are overly burdensome, especially to new librarians starting their careers on a tenure-track trajectory.

As stated earlier, the most useful part of this book is the extensive literature survey. Any scholar researching in this area should consult this literature survey. Librarians at universities and colleges who are involved in campus governance where faculty status and tenure availability are the subject of discussion would find this book useful as it provides a snapshot of conditions at other institutions. After reading the book, I felt a moment of solidarity with my colleagues at other institutions in that we are all facing similar challenges, whether tenure track and holding faculty status or not.