Foreword

As a liaison librarian in a research university, this discussion of librarians as blended professionals makes a lot of sense to me. We are, in fact, blended professionals by definition and work in a unique space within academia that is both administrative and academic. I've been a librarian for 9 years. The positions I've held were all in the liaison model and at universities. The first university I worked for had no formal review process. The other two, including my current position, have formal review processes and fall under the Dean of Faculty, but the librarians do not have faculty status. These experiences allow me to relate to the findings of the study.

I've known the author for years, and we worked together in a university library prior to this study. I witnessed the diligence with which he approaches his studies, as he was working toward his doctorate in Higher Education during the time we were colleagues. We have also collaborated on research projects and presented together at conferences. When working on my own research, I often reach out to him for guidance and support. His education and experience provide him with a unique perspective and one that is well suited to a study such as this one. It is not often that librarians are studied through the lens of higher education research, and, I think, it is a welcome change.

Although this is a singular case study, with pitfalls well acknowledged by the author, I think most liaison librarians would recognize many of the discussions, challenges, and attitudes described. It would be interesting to see this method applied to librarians with different status, as I suspect those similar to the librarians studied here would see the most commonality. That is, those who do not have faculty status but are required to go through a tenure-like review process may relate most closely to the uncertainty that creates. One wonders if librarians with faculty status or administrative status without review, whose expectations are more clearly delineated, experience this as strongly. I'm curious to know how my own colleagues would respond to this line of questioning, as I feel as though there may be even greater disparity in individual liaisons relationships with their departments and faculty here. Would similar themes emerge?

What I find intriguing about this type of work are the other avenues for potential exploration and application that could follow this study. For instance, the author asked the interviewees "What are the barriers to your success?" Not all librarians aspire to the same things. An additional definition of success and a question assessing the interviewee's perception of their own success would add another layer to this interesting discussion on professional role identity.

Still, this adds a new layer of consideration for future research and provides immediate relevance and applicability for professionals in the field. This is the benefit of having a perspective provided by an author who has an understanding of the role that

academic librarians can and do play within the academy, but an academic expertise outside of the discipline.

I look forward to seeing the application of this study and the benefits that it will have for academic librarians. As a group, we spend a great deal of time considering our identity and relevance but are perhaps too influenced by history and administrative pressure. Establishing a new identity, that of a blended professional, may be a way to end the conversations about being faculty versus service personnel, and begin new ones that more clearly explain our roles and how we fit into the academic community.

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