

Analysis and possible resolutions

8

The previous chapters provided the key findings from the study. This chapter will compare these discoveries with respect to the existing literature on the librarian's role and the blended professional model. Since the assertion formally has been made that librarians are in fact blended professionals, the conversation then will consider how the academic librarians at St. Jerome might address some of the limitations that persist in their role as blended professional. The chapter will conclude by proposing pragmatic means to enhance the success of the blended professional role of the academic librarians at St. Jerome and how they might address and overcome the real and perceived obstacles to their professional success.

8.1 Place within the literature

Contrasted with the existing literature on the topic of librarians as faculty members, this study finds cohesion with the argument that suggests the duties of the academic librarians do not compare equally with tenure-track counterparts (Coker, van Duinkerken, & Bales, 2010; Hansson & Johannesson, 2013; Schrimsher & Northrup, 2013). While it is clear that librarians do publish (Baruzzi & Calcagno, 2015; Lamothe, 2012) and instruct (Clark & Chinburg, 2010; Cooke & Rosenthal, 2011; O'Malley & Delwiche, 2012; Shaffer, 2011), the level of productivity and complexity of the role found in this study is not on the same level as tenure-track faculty. Academic librarians at other institutions, in fact, might dispute some of these findings because the arguments may not accurately reflect their role at their particular institution (Dunn, 2013) and reiterate the benefits of full-faculty status for librarians (Parker, 2011). That is acceptable and somewhat expected when a case study is performed. These findings firstly consider St. Jerome. The method may be applied to other colleges and universities, and then comparisons and debates may commence.

At the same time, exterior entities' opinions of the academic librarians and their purpose from faculty and nonlibrary administration are sometimes misguided (Hardesty, 1991; Katz, 2003; Rogers, 2012). At St. Jerome though, the academic librarians occupy a tenuous third space predicated by the real and perceived institutional silos and boundaries that inhibit their blended abilities. Defining this third space and the resulting obstacles serves to provide a model where other libraries might examine the specific roles of their librarians and illuminate prevailing challenges. This work provides the basis of a model for the understanding of librarians' perceptions of their duties and position within the context of higher education.

Still, this project does not imply that librarians do not deserve to be considered faculty or have a role within the governance of the university, which is a predominant

assertion within higher education literature ([Association of College and Research Libraries, 2012](#); [Welch & Mozenter, 2006](#); [Wyss, 2010](#)). The libraries and their academic librarians just fill a unique and different role and space within the educational process. As a result, this study further refines the definition of the librarian role when compared to existing literature.

As stated, the librarians' blended role is much more direct to the curricular student learning process than other noninstructional faculty or student affairs positions. Yes, significant student growth and personal understanding may be found through a student affairs organization, such as a special interest club. However, academic librarians provide the access to and evaluation of researchable material that may directly contribute to student academic success, which is a core mission of any higher education institution. Library literature often focuses on the assessment of library instruction ([Oakleaf, 2009](#); [Sobel & Sugimoto, 2012](#)), which is only a portion of the student's academic lifecycle ([Passehl-Stoddart & Monge, 2014](#)).

Verdicts here suggest that the librarians have the potential for a more significant impact on student learning through their blended role. When unimpeded, librarians have the capacity for more substantive collaborative projects as opposed to mere instruction of information literacy ([Baruzzi & Calcagno, 2015](#)) and tangible academic value ([Oakleaf, 2010](#)). In this way, the application of this blended professional model to academic librarians allows for the argument that the librarians at the very least should be included in more significant communication around the St. Jerome campuses in organizations such as Faculty Senate and curriculum committees.

The argument here also disagrees with literature that suggests that libraries "do not seem to directly contribute to gains in information literacy, to what students gain overall from college, or to student satisfaction" ([Matthews, 2007](#), p. 77). Academic librarians have the ability to be integral cogs in the machinery of student learning. Restrictions on their abilities to blend and interact with different segments of the university community though, both internal and external to the library organization itself, require attention. This study, by applying the blended professional model to the library role, adds another layer to the literature that searches for definitions of librarian role and working space, and enhances the arguments that suggest librarians have significant contributions to university students' learning.

This study is very distinctive in that it applies a higher education-focused model to the role of academic librarians. This is something rarely seen in literature because higher education theorists seldom consider librarians as faculty. Library literature infrequently takes this approach also. A great deal of library-oriented literature related to the function of librarians seeks to make a direct comparison to the faculty ([Coker et al., 2010](#); [Welch & Mozenter, 2006](#)). This usually fails to make an impact because, as asserted in this study, the librarian role is much different than most faculty, and the faculty do not fully understand the actual role of the librarians.

By utilizing the method demonstrated here, this study advocates that librarians have a shared but different role in the production of educated students and scholars. This does not extend fully to the librarian literature that suggests librarians and faculty are equal in their charges. Instead, this work applies the blended professional model in order to codify the working third space of the academic librarians with respect to the

faculty position. Simply put, this method employs the indirect route to validation and may gain more traction because it is not a frontal assault overstating the librarian role.

It was telling that Whitchurch did not consider applying the blended professional model to librarians in her original studies, yet she examined other blended positions such as individuals working within academic advising. This perspective is understandable and expected, having read the existing literature. The librarians' degrees are not respected or (often) at an equivalent level to the rest of the faculty around collegiate campuses, and the function of their role is misunderstood. Whitchurch's model is just another example of librarians and their contributions being overlooked by the higher education community. This study differs in its approach and provides the mold in which to amend that consistent oversight in higher education and librarian literature.

Yet by employing a research model originating in higher education, this study provides the blueprint for inclusion of librarians in the conversation involving faculty and collegiate educators. It merges two fields of academic thought so that librarians might conceptualize themselves as higher education professionals in addition to being library experts. This philosophical nudge empowers the librarian role by demonstrating its significance in the total context of higher education.

8.2 Modifying the blended professional

The blended professional frame was intended to analyze the professional roles and identities of the traditional conception of academic faculty. The librarian's blended professional experience never was considered. Whitchurch's model is also relatively new (published in 2009), so the application of the theory to varying classifications of faculty has yet to occur. As a result, there is no direct comparison in the literature to which the findings of this study might be compared. This study is an entirely new addition to the literature in that regard.

Therefore, the foremost contribution of this dissertation concerning the blended professional model is the study's application of the frame to a new professional in the academic realm, the academic librarian. The employment of the blended professional model on academic librarians demonstrates the malleability and usefulness of the frame when applied to nontenure-track or traditional faculty members of the university collective. As well, Whitchurch (2009, p. 408) described the experience of blended professionals as navigating the "history and tensions between different factions and groups". This held firm for the librarians studied here. The academic librarians must negotiate the expectations of the library administration, interpret the ever-changing needs and requirements of the student populace, and perform outreach to faculty, all while combating the historical role of a librarian as a mere administrator of the university repository. With this in mind, it is clear through this analysis that academic librarians are blended professionals.

Additionally, aspects of the model netted sundry or completely different attributes when applied to librarians. For example, the spaces for librarians are clearly library-centric. Everything originates from the understanding of the library, its resources, and

the navigation thereof. In contrast, spaces for other blended professional would extend out from either an academic department or the classroom. This should be expected due to the fact that librarians functionally have different roles than the professionals studied in the original model. All of these factors intertwine and aid in the construction of the librarian as a blended professional.

For the most part, the existing blended professional model generally retains usefulness when analyzing current professional identities within traditional higher education settings. What the model does not fully take into account is the driving force behind an individual's change from a traditional, encased role to that of a blended professional. [Whitchurch \(2009, p. 418\)](#) implies that the institutional environment or management promotes the blended role. For example, "leadership was described variously as 'a facilitator,' 'identifying new initiatives and projects,' 'creating opportunities' and 'releasing potential'". This is certainly one of the catalysts at St. Jerome, as administration is promoting more academic professionalism and librarian outreach. Other factors, such as financial cuts that create the elimination of positions and encourage the development of cross-training skills to account for personnel shortfall also surely are a facilitator of professional change. However, both of these influences ignore the major consideration of technology, especially within the libraries.

My first job in a library as a graduate student involved "sweeping" bound journals once an hour. Library patrons routinely left piles of these periodicals by photocopiers because print copies of these materials were the only way to obtain them. Approximately 10 years later, the majority of print periodicals are in offsite storage because patrons find access to journals online. That student role in the libraries is completely different due to technological advancement.

The academic librarians' roles surely have changed as well, from their understanding on how to obtain the materials to the navigation and interpretation of the resources. Their working third space undoubtedly is more extensive with the availability of online resources and interactive materials. As well, the librarians' ability to interact with a larger populace in a less fixed environment has also shifted. Technology will have a greater impact for some sectors of blended professionals in higher education like librarians than it will for other workers in different departments.

If this model was applied in 2005, the results and perceptions of professional identities of the librarians and other professionals likely would be different than the findings of this study, or one conducted in another 10 years. Although this is a case study analyzing one segment of the university community, the educated guess is that such insight would help professionals other than librarians gain the most practical information when applying the frame. Granted, the goal of a model such as this is not to examine the catalysts of the development of professional roles and identities, but rather the forces shaping the conceptualization of that identity once it is formed.

The blended professional model consequently provides an accurate snapshot of the perceptions of current working conditions, but the usefulness of findings might have a short shelf-life due to factors promoting changing roles. Therefore, being cognizant of the causes of changes regarding blended professional identities will help further identify solutions for the obstacles to professional success and development

that impede blended professionals and their organizations because it will offer a total understanding of the role. While adding considerations on causes to the actual model is not recommended, the addition of a question regarding the perceived factors initiating or perpetuating blended professional activities should be added to the qualitative questions, as it will provide supplemental perspectives on the formation of the subjects' professional identities.

Also, while the blended professional model as a whole is exceptionally useful for gaining insight into the professional identity of higher education professionals, there is another distinct suggestion for revision that warrants more attention than technology. Whitchurch's frame does not have an actual consideration of the impact of gender identity on professional identity. This is a case study analyzing the perceptions of 17 female workers in one segment of the university community. As well, not all interviewed librarians even explicitly stated that gender influenced their perception of their job. This reality limits my ability to promote a wholesale change to the process of professional identity investigation.

Still, a modification to the blended professional model allowing for the impact of gender might be in order for future studies that seek to employ it. See [Fig. 8.1](#) for an illustration of gender as an additional component of the blended professional model. Though gender-related obstacles were not a universally-cited concern with the interviewed librarians in this case, additional studies utilizing the blended professional model might consider employing questions that directly ask about perceptions of gender.

Librarianship is statistically two-thirds female, and at St. Jerome, that percentage is even higher. Other blended professional fields in higher education where employees also have professional faculty status, such as career services, have a high percentage of female employees. For example, at St. Jerome, there are 20 full-time employees in the career services department; 17 are female. Consequently, multiple blended professional fields in higher education will have a significant female presence.

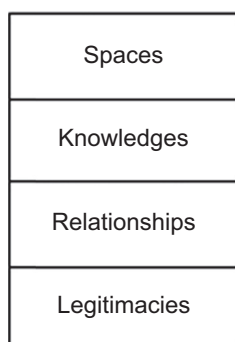
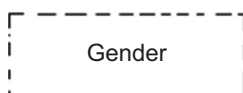


Figure 8.1 This image illustrates the addition of gender as a potential fifth component of the blended professional frame.



In addition, existing literature suggests that women often already possess blended roles (wife, mother, employee, etc.) (Couzy, 2012; English & Callaway, 2013; Rao, 2003; Stefanisko, 1997). Several conversations in this study confirmed this assertion. It has been established that women do not have a fair chance for professional equality in higher education (Clarke, Hyde, & Drennan, 2013; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). Literature also states that women as professionals are hampered by inherent and existing gender biases (Bagilhole & White, 2008; Fulmer, 2010; Garn & Brown, 2008). Again, the findings from this work verify that some women indeed are obstructed professionally by gender prejudices.

Therefore, it is reasonable to postulate that, given these biases that exist in the workplace and higher education as a whole, female professionals in fields other than library science might have an altered perspective on their roles within the academy due to experiences with blended roles and confrontations with partiality. Logically, this indicates that examining gender as an influencing factor for the development of professional identity of female blended professionals in higher education is valid. The application of the blended professional model with respect to gender melds these conversations—women in higher education and blended professionalism—and provides for a further understanding of women's role within the academy.

This is especially important within the context of all higher education because the literature has demonstrated that there is a consistent lack of egalitarianism and opportunity for women in the academy (Bowen, 2005; Chisholm-Burns et al., 2012; Fowler et al., 2004; Guillory, 2001; Lanier, Tanner, & Guidry, 2009; Mason, 2011; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). Gender has been demonstrated to have an effect on professional identity and career path in female-dominated careers such as social work (Lewis, 2004). These realities very likely have an effect on the spaces and relationships that a blended professional might inhabit and develop by placing real or artificial boundaries around the professional third space. Are the knowledges and legitimacies of working women equally mitigated? With librarians, the limits of their education inhibited the extension of their profile. Do female blended professionals with doctoral degrees still face biases regarding knowledges and legitimacies? The assumption based on existing literature and this study is yes, the biases persist. The application of the blended professional model with additional questions or categories considering gender may better codify the concern and elucidate realistic solutions.

Despite the focus on the female identity in higher education, gender identity issues have the ability to impact other genders. For instance, gender also has the ability to influence the professional identity when the individual works in a field accepted or viewed as belonging to the opposite gender, such as male nurses (Hoeve, Jansen, & Roodbol, 2014). Often, the nursing field is viewed as subordinate to medical doctors (Hoeve et al., 2014), which would be akin to academic librarians conceptualizing their role as in service to the needs of tenure-track faculty. Since librarianship traditionally emerged as a female occupation, explorations on the influence of the stereotype on male librarians have been considered (Gordon, 2004; Holland, 2007). It was noted earlier that library administrators (both at St. Jerome and elsewhere) tend to be male. However, perhaps in this instance, gender has the inverse effect on the equity and opportunity throughout the academy for the male frontline liaison-level librarians.

This potential addition to the blended professional frame would give researchers a viable means by which to examine any measurable impact that stereotype has on male librarian's blended professional identities and working third space.

Even on the smallest scale, explicit questions regarding gender should be asked of interviewees in order to assess the amount of influence this factor has on their professional identity development. If a significant number of respondents in the future studies indicate that gender does play a major part in their professional identity, then formally adding gender as a fifth category in the blended professional frame will become more reasonable.

For librarians, this was a micro-study that provided the model for the analysis of their role in the larger context of higher education. Reflexively, the application of gender to the blended professional model demonstrates its usefulness on the macroscale. This work suggests that gender has, at the very least, a partial impact on the perception of professional identity for one segment of workers in the higher education community. However, by adjusting the blended professional model to reflect the influence of gender, this study establishes another means by which to codify the experience and perception of women in higher education on a much larger level. It is another argument in the conversation on how unequal treatment in the workplace may negatively affect the worker and the organization.

Again, the size of this study does not allow for a conclusive argument suggesting a major overhaul to the blended professional model. This book is one very small enhancement to the literature on the female academic librarian role with respect to professional identity. Yet the anticipation is that an expansion of the frame will benefit the codification of the blended role within all of higher education. This approach for future studies will give a more comprehensive understanding of the blended role because it specifically addresses an issue that continues to be a concern in higher education: the impact of gender on professional role, identity, and development.

8.2.1 *Practical recommendations*

In terms of pragmatism for the immediate study, the findings presented in the previous chapter indicate that the librarians at St. Jerome are indeed blended professionals. However, restrictions of space and professional challenges prevent the librarians from being fully effective in their capacity as blended professionals on an academic campus. The following is meant to offer potential solutions that will address directly the some of the cited concerns from this case study and hopefully alleviate some of these difficulties for the academic librarians at St. Jerome.

At the same time, through the analysis of the interviews and the librarians' comments and concerns, I became more cognizant of my own standing within the community of librarians interviewed. As a result, I am attempting to provide illumination of issues and potential solutions without projecting my own personal perspectives or work ethic on that of the librarians. This admittedly is a difficult and challenging mission. While this work furthers my empathy regarding the role and professional identities of the librarians at St. Jerome, the experiences of the interviewer and interviewees inherently remain separate and unequal. Simply put, my role at the time of research and those of the academic librarians are different on a social and logistical plane.

This work additionally is an opportunity for an underrepresented or unheard faction of the university community to voice their opinions and beliefs about their role. It is therefore crucial that the suggestions for situational improvement do not trample these views by projecting them as mere musings of a disgruntled sect. The findings presented illustrate valid opinions of these female academic librarians and symbolize a unique insight into one specific yet significant campus group.

Take the deliberation about lack of time, for instance. The implication is that there is more time available to complete tasks and projects that might improve the social and cultural standing of librarians at St. Jerome. However, my own perception of time might be wholly different from the librarian quoted earlier in the book as having difficulty managing the complexities of work, life, and motherhood. The goal then is to detail these concerns and perceptions without undermining their validity through biased interpretation.

At some point, the obstacles becoming impassible realities. Consider the librarian who had a great opportunity to advance her career but chose not to leave her current job due to familial reasons. She geographically is limited in the scope of options, and there are few, if any, opportunities to advance in her current role. In that case, considerations external to the job converge with the realities of the role to create a substantial, if not immovable, obstacle. Situations like this make any proposed resolution suspicious due to the most significant professional obstacle detailed: the library organization and administration at St. Jerome itself.

I do believe that aspects of the organization must change in order to benefit the librarians' experience. On the microscale, librarians might address concerns with colleagues and managers in hopes of improving on the basic obstacles to the librarians' professional success. However, for several reasons previously asserted—organizational structure, poor communication, and inability of the administration to maneuver around itself—I do not believe that wholesale revolution in this environment is a likely outcome.

It is understandable that some librarians might not want to or cannot leave St. Jerome for any variety of personal or professional reasons, yet they still might desire improvement in spite of organizational limitations. At that point when the situation is not likely to change, the only option is that the individual's reaction to the circumstances must be altered. The librarian then might focus on the aspects of the job in which they find the greatest enjoyment. Many librarians cited working with students and faculty and interacting with the community at St. Jerome as gratifying. Focusing on the positive facets of the role might, in some cases, be the only true real or perceptual change that a particular librarian might make at this point in their lives.

Again, the argument here is not to mitigate the concerns raised by the librarians but instead alleviate some of the obstacles standing in their path. While many of the forthcoming suggestions might address some of the concerns, in some cases, comprehensive change is not realistic. In those circumstances though, even small perceptual alterations, however pedestrian that proposal might seem, might improve the overall situation.

8.2.2 Spaces

A few of the recommendations provided here will bridge multiple characteristics of the blended professional. For instance, office space improvements speak to both spaces and legitimacies. If an office is a sign of a legitimate faculty member on the St. Jerome campus, then the academic librarians appear lacking in that regard. Fortunately, there is an ongoing construction project at the Alexander VI Library that will completely redesign the working space of the librarians. Each librarian presently is slated to have their own office. This will mean that all of the liaison librarians at St. Jerome libraries, except those at the Urban II, will have personal working spaces in the form of legitimate offices. The librarians and managers at St. Jerome should be cognizant of the preexisting perception of Alexander VI Library-oriented decision-making biases. The difference in office provisions might further divide Urban II librarians from their colleagues through perceptions of unfair practices.

Increasing an understanding of the technologies used also would enhance the spaces in which librarians might develop. There has been some reluctance to incorporate technologies into the daily routine of librarianship at St. Jerome though. As Lucy states:

[Librarians] don't want to admit that they don't know how to do it. So that's the worst thing. If you say "Yeah, I want to help but I don't know" I'd be fine with that. But some people say that they know how to do it but then when you work with them you find that they really don't and they don't want to admit to ignorance.

Right now, all of the librarians use virtual reference, but not as many use Skype, the Blackboard portal tool Collaborate, One Button Studio video maker, and other forms of interactive technology. There is a learning curve for these technologies, and not all products are useful to every discipline. Discretion should be exercised when deciding which technologies to harness and master.

The speed at which institutions adopt technology often is outpaced by the users' need or desire to utilize that specific equipment. For instance, the Alexander VI Library had a graduate research assistant who knew how to develop Quick Response (QR) codes. By the time he received approval to move forward with a QR code project for the library, the trend had passed and students no longer were scanning these codes in an attempt to gather information. Even so, while there still is significant value in the physical space of a traditional library, in order to maintain a presence with the ubiquitous learners frequenting the campuses of the 21st century, the understanding of a librarians' third space must now extend to the virtual realm as well.

8.2.3 Knowledges

There is no reasonably quick development for some knowledges. Take, for example, the librarians who cited their job experience as the factor that led to their ability to navigate the resources. That type of knowledge simply requires time and effective practice. Other aspects, though, have much more rapid resolution.

The inability to conduct high-level quantitative or qualitative research due to a lack of coursework and training during their graduate education confounded many of the interviewed librarians. A simple solution to that obstacle is to enroll in methodology courses in order to gain the education needed and desired to complete these research projects. Coincidentally, St. Jerome offers 12 free credits of course study per year (with a maximum of 6 credits per semester) to all full-time employees.

This suggestion might be met with scrutiny by the librarians that suggest their time already is at a premium. This is also where it is very difficult for me not to project my own expectations and experiences on the academic librarians. I completed a doctorate while having a full-time job and a part-time job. I also managed several individuals who were working on master's degrees in library science or other disciplines who were in the same situation. Is sitting in class until 10 pm one or more nights a week always enjoyable? No, it is not. However, it serves the purpose of increasing the knowledge of a blended professional at a minimal cost.

There are some current librarians at St. Jerome that take advantage of this benefit. Other librarians enroll in courses at external universities (at their own expense). It might be worth either the librarians themselves or managers consulting these individuals in order to ascertain how they are able to balance the roles of librarian and student. Perhaps librarian schedules might be modified in order to accommodate the professional growth associated with knowledge development.

8.2.4 Relationships

Around campus, expanding relationships into certain sectors is difficult, if not impossible. Some of the faculty simply has no interest in having the librarians in their classes, nor do they wish to work with them on projects. No amount of academic productivity or outreach by the librarians will change their minds. Aside from direct orders from their department dean, there is no chance of developing a relationship with these types of individuals.

One current library administration-backed project is the Balanced Scorecard, which is a management strategy designed to align personnel activities with institutional missions (Balanced Scorecard Institute, 2014). Because it attempts to apply numerical expectations to activities that are difficult to quantify, such as research or outreach, its intrusion is not appreciated. The end result is academic librarians attempting to navigate what is perceived to be unnecessary or unrealistic change, producing frustration and exasperation.

As an administrator, I understand why St. Jerome's library management, as part of the Balanced Scorecard, is pushing the academic librarians to increase (numerically) partnerships throughout the university. It is an attempt to implement a strategic planning system that aligns the institution's missions with the activities of the employees. However, it puts the librarians in a bind because so many of the components of these types of initiatives are inappropriate for the environment in which they are to be executed.

Here, being realistic makes sense. First, get rid of any statistical pressure to "make friends" in different departments around the university. The library is not a sales

department. Productivity should not be measured through factors that require persuasion of individuals into equal partnerships. Second, keep the door open if these resistant faculty ever wish to ask for assistance, but do not spend the effort on a lost cause. Work with the faculty who are receptive, and strengthen those relationships. If the librarians focus on the productive partnerships, then it will save a lot of time and energy over the long haul.

The relationships internal to the library also have to extend beyond the boundaries of the individual libraries and campuses. Schedule visits once a month to libraries on the separate campuses in order to maintain or develop rapport and keep colleagues abreast of current projects. Travel between campuses can be difficult with the traffic congestion, but once a month, 12 visits per year, is not too much to endure if the activity is meaningful. As well, these may be informal meetings over coffee or lunch. Formality is not a necessity for relationship development, and in some ways, casual gatherings might serve as a welcome relief from the daily librarian grind.

The librarians also must broaden their pool of prospective research partners. Specifically, they must begin to regard both students and classified staff as potential collaborators. As liaisons, they have access to many graduate students working on theses or dissertations. Also, many of the classified staff workers within the organization, often in the same department, have advanced degrees and experience in high-level research and publication. Start projects with these folks. Both students and staff members benefit from collaboration with the librarians because they enhance their research skills and resumes so that they might advance in their own fields. The librarians also profit because they are performing service and outreach, thereby increasing their blended role and producing academically as well.

One of the better ways to develop a research pipeline is to connect with one or more individuals on prospective projects. It reduces the total workload per research venture, thus allowing for the researcher simultaneously to complete multiple studies. This ideology simply provides the partnerships.

8.2.5 Legitimacies

Similar to the discussion with knowledges, coursework provides the opportunity to expand legitimacies of the academic librarians at St. Jerome. Taking the suggestion a step further, completing a certificate or degree program may increase legitimacy by providing the librarian with the all-important hegemonic device of higher education: the letters after one's name. The additional knowledge of program language further extends boundaries and opportunities for the academic librarian.

Again, this recommendation might find protest due to the time required for collegiate study. Nevertheless, if the librarian seeks to use only the 12 free credits per year, their student status will remain part-time. While taxing with a full-time job, family, and social life, this represents a reasonable opportunity for motivated individuals.

This proposition may be trickier, though, than merely enrolling in research methodology courses due to the potential for inadvertently creating a student–faculty relationship instead of a librarian–faculty association. Building collaborative relationships

becomes problematic when the librarian registers for a course taught by a member of the department for which they liaise. This is especially so if the librarian performs poorly as a student!

At the same time, a good performance in the class might provide for the development of future collaborations by establishing a working relationship. The librarian truly concerned by this might strategically avoid certain faculty throughout their studies or simply seek to define the roles with the faculty member prior to the start of the class or program. In the end, enrolling in a degree or certificate program is a cost-effective means to add layers to the blended professional role.

8.2.6 Final thoughts on blended professionalism

The above suggestions represent what the librarians as individuals might do in order to be successful in their blended positions. The librarians cannot succeed alone in their endeavors though. In total terms of increasing the blended professional role and third space of the academic librarians at St. Jerome, the administration also must aggressively promote these professionals' skills. Maria provided the following analogy.

That's where I think the sales job needs to come from the director. Sales job...I think I've used this analogy before. The director is the sales guy out there with the plow. He's plowing the field, sowing some seeds, you know. Gosh guys, over here is going to be the wheat, over here is some corn, over here are the soy beans, we're going to let this sit fallow...bah bah! Your librarians come in behind. Okay, we're the wheat guys. We're the corn guys. We're the soy bean guys and let's get this crop going here. But I think your leader...your top dog...is your lead liaison, if you will. He's the top salesman. And that's the person who's in these meetings with deans and directors here.

As Maria asserts, that library director position has the ear of the executive levels of the university and can bridge some of the silo gaps that encumber librarian outreach, especially with highly resistant faculty. In general, my overall understanding was that the librarians did not feel that director of the libraries or his direct subordinates did well enough to work at promoting the research accomplishments of St. Jerome's librarians.

If the director is analogous to the "sales guy," then currently the librarians are his assistants making cold calls on his behalf because he does not have enough active leads. The academic librarians have specialties that would promote promising collaboration. They just need some additional support from the top that endorses the variety of the blended professional abilities that they might offer.

8.3 Additional pragmatic implications

As suggested, some of the obstacles perceived by the academic librarians at St. Jerome appear artificial in creation. Yet the perception of the hurdles as truly existing may affect the views that the librarians have of their own roles. For instance, nearly every

librarian interviewed mentioned time and money as chief concerns. However, the chapter “[Obstacles to professional success](#)” suggested that the perception of these factors as obstacles was misguided. Other factors, such as gender or organizational structure, were less tangible, yet provided very real hurdles to professional success. The following is meant to suggest resolutions that might alleviate some of the consternation for the librarians at St. Jerome.

8.3.1 Time

Time is a frustrating topic to discuss when librarian activities are actually tabulated and measured within the larger context of higher education. Previous discussions (and feedback from the librarians themselves) in this work suggested that other activities of the librarians did not encompass as much depth or breadth as other professionals on campus. The bottom line is that the academic librarians at St. Jerome have more time than their faculty counterparts in most of their activities. What they perceive as constricted time is actually not that bad! However, the fact that the librarians perceive their time to be overly saturated with activities creates a tangible obstacle to professional success and suggests that additional perspectives and analysis from colleagues or managers are needed.

For matters of time, librarians might do a desk audit of their schedules and keep track of their hourly activities for a week, a month, or longer. This will demonstrate how their hours are being used, and when discussed with a manager or colleague, viable scheduling plans might develop. In the short run, this method might open the librarians to micromanagement by allowing an increased inspection of their respective activities. However, the overall understanding of productivity and time management benefits the librarians in the end by providing means for increased efficiency. If time constraints really do heavily affect the productivity of librarians, then spread some of their responsibilities to the classified staff in order to lighten the load (and provide the classified staff with new or expanded professional development opportunities). In this way, the librarians might maximize their ability to stretch their operational third space in a more efficient manner.

8.3.2 Money

Librarians presume that having the responsibility, or at the very least strong encouragement, of the production of tenure-track-level research remains unfair due to the discrepancy in comparative salaries and compensation between the two factions. The chapter “[Obstacles to professional success](#)” suggested that the gaps in pay are far less than the librarians believed. Yes, there are STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) faculty and full professors walking around St. Jerome’s campus who annually make well into the six figures. However, there also are plenty of PhD-holding assistant professors making \$53,000 as well (that’s a meager salary for the general locale of St. Jerome).

Truthfully though, a lack of a high salary or compensation should not prevent research productivity. The concept of pay-for-productivity is a mentality best suited

to a sales environment, not a research department in a higher education library. At the very least, the librarians who produce scholarship are adding valuable lines to their curriculum vitae. Holistically though, academic professionalism benefits the individual(s) because it increases understanding of the research process, which is seminal to an academic librarian's role.

Also, thousands of journals do not charge for publication, and there are a variety of cost-effective conferences to attend. In fact, with many of the free qualitative and quantitative research programs provided by the library, conducting research and producing scholarship can cost nothing at all. If substantial funding is required, then apply for grant funding. This is not meant to be groundbreaking advice; it is an encouragement to be realistic and work with the limited funding to the best of one's ability.

The benefits received by the librarians meet the standards of the field. Few people enter higher education to become rich. It seems foolish then to fault low compensation as a hindrance to success in that chosen field.

Again, when I conducted this research, I was classified staff and not a librarian. Hierarchically, I was a subordinate. In my current role at another university, I work outside of the libraries, and I still am not a librarian. As a result, if I myself asserted my findings concerning librarian compensation during a staff meeting, it is likely not to be well received. However, if librarian peers or managers illustrate this reality, then contextually some of the concern might be assuaged through reasonable discussion.

8.3.3 Gender

It was stated that I, in fact, was surprised by the rather reserved representation of gender in the comments by the librarians. It must be noted though that perhaps the librarians have become accustomed to the situation in which they work, or they have become complacent with the role and space. Unless prompted, they might not even perceive a gender difference because this is their daily existence. In addition, I am male. Some of the librarians might have been more forthcoming speaking with a female interviewer. Hopefully, this project at least provided the interviewed librarians with an opportunity to reflect upon their jobs with respect to gender and contemplate how it might affect their blended professional role.

In terms of change though, there have been numerous studies suggesting ways to create positive change toward gender equality in the workplace. In order to provide equal pay and opportunity for working women, there have been suggestions to add benefits such as onsite daycare (Alsever, 2013), the proposal of legal initiatives demanding equal pay from as high up as the White House (White House, 2014), and the establishment of higher quality mentoring programs in order to promote female managers (Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010). These are great suggestions, but St. Jerome already has a daycare facility, actively encourages managers to consider equal compensation and promotion in spite of gender, and has several faculty and staff mentoring programs in action. Yet in spite of these and like initiatives, concerns persist.

The goal here then is not to suggest overarching modifications. Realistically, if I actually had drastic solutions to these concerns, I would be assessing corporations professionally, and I would be far, far richer. Instead, the hope is that the recommendations will serve this immediate case and potentially expand through further research and assessment.

On a university level, perhaps an increased positive understanding of the academic librarian role at St. Jerome throughout the university community would provide the continued opportunity for the librarians to assess their professional challenges. Again, the misunderstanding by the faculty may directly relate to the conflicted role that the librarians have of themselves. They view themselves as service providers, yet the administration emphasizes collaboration. Collaboration suggests equal or at least similar standing in role. Service retains the connotation of “servant.” These are wholly different ideologies that are difficult to reconcile, resulting in a lack of shared ventures and a reduction in blended space.

Given the feedback that many of the female librarians felt like “academic handmaidens” or “minions” of the faculty, administration should adhere to one identity and stick to it. If the administration desires collaboration, then promote the academic achievements of the librarians instead of emphasizing service. If service is to become the main provision, then the administration should be cognizant of how this identity effects the perception of the role for female librarians and be prepared to address any potential fallout.

In the hierarchy of higher education, academic production is valued over service. Therefore I would recommend the focus on academic professionalism in order to bolster collaborative opportunities. How might this be accomplished? Promote the positive academic contributions of the female employees.

However, the librarians at St. Jerome seem apprehensive at personal self-promotion, in part due to personality. For example, introversion was suggested as possibly preventing outreach. Lucy confessed: “I think a lot of librarians by default are more introverts. Yeah, let’s just face it. By librarian standards I am not an introvert but by regular human standards I am.” This inward-facing mentality was apparent when many librarians cited individual consultations as opposed to classroom instruction as the most pleasant contributions to a good day in the library. Julia echoes many similar statements when she says: “I think that the most important thing that I do is working with students individually.” Studies have shown that 65–75% of the general population is extroverted, whereas approximately 63% of librarians are introverted (Milford & Wisotzke, 2011). Compound this with the “service-first” mentality that many of the librarians hold due to gender expectations. It is possible, therefore, that librarians excel at one-on-one interactions and consultations but fail to thrive in outreach endeavors (Milford & Wisotzke, 2011).

Therefore, in lieu of personal outreach, the female librarians might benefit from administration-led outreach. Individual librarians might make contacts with some of the faculty in a department. However, the administration has a better opportunity to gain the ear of deans and department heads due to the relative equality of the professional levels. As opposed to opening a few doors, this approach may open all of them. This is especially important in fields where a female presence is lacking, such as STEM.

Another basic recommendation is for the increase in the diversity of the librarians. Ethnic identification was not asked of the librarians during the interview. However, within the American Research Libraries in 2011–12, 85.8% of the librarians identified as Caucasian; only 14.2% held minority status (Chang, 2013). Anecdotally, this trend continues at St. Jerome, and this is something that may affect the productivity in the libraries. As Lucy states:

I think one of maybe the big problems with stagnation with some of the libraries that I've worked with or in that were bad was that the demographic was all the same. Very similar in ages, background, ethnicity whatever. I think that's one of the problems with attracting the diversity and having a vibrant field is that there's been a lot of concentration of people who think the same and we need more perspectives. We need more diversity, period.

It seems kind of odd that one would suggest decreasing the percentage of white women in a position in order to advance their role within an organization. However, a different professional and personal experience brought to an organization by a diverse group of individuals provides the opportunity for a dynamic workplace. Diversity provides the chance to view problems from a variety of perspectives not necessarily available to a homogenous group. In order to further the collective roles of the female academic librarians at St. Jerome, it would be useful to have individuals with specialties and voices who might interact and blend professionally with a greater population of the university community.

St. Jerome has generic faculty and staff mentoring programs in place. However, a formalized library-based mentoring initiative might help increase support and promote cross-departmental collaboration. The interviews suggested that any mentoring, either vertical or lateral in nature, originated and stayed within contained departments. Some librarians even expressed disappointment with the inability to work together with librarians on different campuses. This compartmentalization might hinder professional growth and development by limiting the viewpoints and alternatives presented regarding professional options.

There are female leaders within the libraries, and many took different paths to their current roles. How did they get into their position? What was their career path? If a director in, say, the Urban II Library met with an Alexander VI librarian, it would offer additional professional perspective not available necessarily within the department. Due to the geographic and cultural silos that presently exist, this sort of partnership might require the intervention of administration in order to ensure that the program commences and maintains activity though.

This paper certainly is not going to solve the longstanding issue of gender inequality within higher education. Like it or not, biases exist that make it very difficult to encourage positive change, especially in systems as regimented as a state institution of higher education, where evolution occurs at a glacial pace. However, awareness of the issue and internal and external conversation by the female academic librarians at St. Jerome is a start, and hopefully in some small way, this project may increase their blended professional roles through cognizance.

8.3.4 Organization

Finally, one of the benefits of a case study is that the recommended pragmatic changes occur on a microscale. It is much easier to address operational concerns on a university level than to attempt to produce system-wide changes. Communication seemingly is the easiest to address. These suggestions serve St. Jerome; while they may apply at different universities as well, prior blended professional research and institutional assessment must transpire prior to consideration.

The first matter to consider is the organization itself. To start, in a hierarchical system, positive change occurs from the top (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Administrators have the opportunity to lead by example. For instance, if the desire is to promote librarian academic professionalism and productivity, then the administration might publish or present as a means of inspiration. The librarians at St. Jerome do not feel that this occurs, however. As Bridget said: “There’s also very much a level of ‘you all do this [academic productivity]...’ But I don’t see the administration doing any of it. And that sort of hypocritical situation is sort of frustrating.” This is a relatively simple resolution for the administration. If they are not publishing, then seek to publish. If they presently are successful in these pursuits, then effectively communicate so that subordinates may know and appreciate the efforts.

Continuing with communication, many of the librarians noted that the personal or electronic contact from the director level of administration particularly was poor. For instance, at the Alexander VI Library, the reference desk is being eliminated. The general understanding is that the initiative will increase customer service and provide librarians with more time to perform outreach. Still, the librarians do not understand the “how” and “why” this change is taking place. This particular issue might be resolved with an open forum, yet it has festered since prior to the interviews for this project. This does not suggest that nonmanagerial employees should know all of the reasoning behind executive decisions. However, in order to “gain the buy-in,” proper and timely explanations regarding significant role changes or other pertinent concerns should reach the appropriate constituent parties. The effective communication will benefit the organizational morale and productivity by removing the specter of uncertainty in their daily activities.

Another major hurdle for change concerns professional advancement. As mentioned, the librarians do not have many upward options within the St. Jerome system. While presumably the four individuals at the VP level eventually will retire, this cannot be counted on as a means for future librarian advancement due to the lack of a timetable. As a result, administration must consider other internal leadership opportunities for the academic librarians. Currently, there are 2-year appointments for organizational needs, such as Graduate Research Assistant Coordinator, Virtual Reference Coordinator, Assistive Technology Coordinator, and Alexander VI Reference Department Assistant Head. These are effective offerings that allow the academic librarians to bolster their resumes for both internal and external opportunities when they arise.

Still, these positions codify and formalize basic activities that already existed within the library system. Wholly new opportunities for the librarians should be considered. For instance, the administration encourages academic professionalism. Why

not create a research-oriented position as well? This position might coordinate grant writing, presentation proposals, article submissions, and so on. Such a position and role simultaneously would cater to the needs of administration and librarians.

Also contemplate classified staff. The “paraprofessional” title of classified staff that works in the libraries creates the illusion that the present job is a stepping stone. For example, the expectation during the course of research for this project that I, and all the other classified staff that earn graduate degrees while working within the library system, will graduate and find employment elsewhere. Immediately following the interviews, nearly all the librarians asked, “What are you going to do next?” implying that I would leave as soon as an opportunity presented itself. In my case, I did take an external professional position soon after I completed the doctorate. Ideally though, I would have stayed in that position or a slightly more advanced role for the time being due to matters in my personal life. What if another staff member needs to stay due to personal or professional reasons? What happens if the staff member actually *wants* to stay?

Organizationally, that is a mindset that needs to change. From a human resources perspective, it makes little sense to train employees on a professional level and then let those skills walk out the door. The resources invested in creating a marketable and productive employee will benefit the future employer, not the St. Jerome libraries. As well, it produces stagnation in the advancement of the employee. Along with my then-colleagues approaching the end of their studies, after I reached ABD status, I no longer received on-the-job professional development, since it is viewed as “wasted energy” spending time improving someone who inevitably will depart. It is a detrimental system for both the individual and the organization.

Obviously, the need for St. Jerome to work within the guidelines designed by the state inhibits some of the opportunities for individual’s growth and advancement within the organization. In fact, one of the librarians with the most seniority estimated that since the mid-1990s, only four classified employees were promoted to the professional faculty level. That amount of opportunity paints a bleak picture for classified staff currently within the system.

Yet there is opportunity to redesign the classified roles so that the employee might expand their responsibilities on the job. Recall the classified staff member mentioned by Jessica who excelled at analyzing spreadsheets but grew frustrated with formal restrictions and a lack of recognition. Management may modify the employee work profiles of classified staff at any point during the calendar year. Why not rework job descriptions and reward these employees for their productivity and enterprise? Elevation from classified staff to administrative faculty may not be possible with state and budget restrictions, but the demonstration of flexibility promotes the idea of opportunity and answers the concern about employee differentiation and integration.

It is at this point that the hierarchy that exists in the St. Jerome organization will mitigate the efforts to change. Not all proponents of change have a viable means to express their opinions. Ultimately, following the completion of the research, I offered the findings and suggestions to my line manager and other midlevel personnel. As classified staff, I was not a member of Librarians’ Council, which is the group that has the most control over policy within the libraries at St. Jerome. As a result, aside from

publishing the findings, I really had no voice or audience to speak on a larger level, which is similar to what the librarians themselves experience, being absent from St. Jerome's Faculty Senate. If the academic librarians truly would like change, then they will have to address the issue themselves through petitioning of the administration. Whether that happens or whether it will be successful remains to be seen.

8.4 Conclusion

The academic librarians of St. Jerome face a number of challenges in their role as blended professionals. However, there are means by which they might overcome some of the difficulties, and the implementation of this model will allow researchers, librarians, and administrators to identify some of the chief concerns. As well, by utilizing a research model originating in higher education, this study provides the outline for the inclusion of librarians in the conversation involving faculty and collegiate educators. This study promotes the idea that librarians have a shared but different role in the production of educated students and scholars.

There are aspects of the blended professional model that do not completely address the development of professional identity for all members of the higher education community. Due to the influence of technology, the model provides only an ephemeral snapshot for academic librarians' perceptions. Additionally, gender likely plays a greater part in the development of professional identity to certain segments of the higher education population, depending upon the actual professional role. This was a case study, and the findings cannot be deemed wholly conclusive for the entirety of higher education. However, my inclination from both the research and professional experience is to believe that gender has a significant place in the formation of the blended professional's identity. It is just up to future research to prove this consideration and formally add gender as a fifth frame to the model. The avenues of potential prospective inquiries guide the discussion to the final chapter.

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