

## **PUBLISHING, TENURE AND PROMOTION**

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In 1943 when Carl White accepted the dual position of director of libraries and dean of the school of library service at Columbia University, he wrote to Princeton University Librarian Julian Boyd, asking for his advice and opinion on the role of the academic librarian. Boyd was not only a librarian but a nationally recognized scholar, having spent much of his working life editing the papers of Thomas Jefferson. Boyd wrote a concise and succinct statement on the problem of the librarian's status in relation to the university teaching faculty:

The University Librarian is the one person next to the president in the academic community charged with the responsibility of thinking of the whole institution rather than in terms of a department; he should regard himself as an educator rather than a custodian of books ... the librarian cannot meet individual scholars, committees, and officers of administration on their own terms, command their respect, and bring his voice to bear upon their problems ...unless he is himself a scholar. (Carl White Papers. Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library).

The question of research and publications for librarians is not much different today than it was in White's day. We don't have direct evidence of White's reaction to Boyd's letter, but his early years at Columbia were marked by curricular revisions with an aim toward increased professionalism and research.

The very fact that librarians have faculty status in CUNY puts them in a somewhat precarious position when it comes to receiving tenure and promotion. We work longer contractual hours but we are held to similar standards for the "3-legged stool of teaching, service, and publication." Our long hours and insufficient research time puts us at a disadvantage to the classroom faculty, because we are judged on similar standards for publication but without the comparable time off to write. This leads us into a state in which, elsewhere I have compared the librarian to Hegel's "Unhappy Consciousness":

The Unhappy Consciousness, the Alienated Soul which is the consciousness of self as a divided nature, a doubled and merely contradictory being. This unhappy consciousness, divided and at variance with itself, must, because this contraction of its essential nature is felt to be a single consciousness, always have in the one consciousness the other also; and thus must be straightway driven out of each in turn, when it thinks it has therein attained to the victory and rest of unity. Its true return into itself, or reconciliation with itself, will, however, display the notion of mind endowed with a life and existence of its own, because it implicitly involves the fact that, while being an undivided consciousness, it is a double-consciousness. It is itself the fazing of one self-consciousness into another, and

itself is both, and the unity of both is also its own essence; but objectively and consciously it is not yet this essence itself –is not yet the unity of both. (G.W.F. Hegel, Phenomenology of Mind . London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966. p. 251).

To relate Hegel's idea to the librarian we see that the librarian models himself after the core figure in academia – the classroom faculty – and this modeling creates the double or Unhappy Consciousness because of the dual nature of being both librarian and faculty, but not quite classroom faculty. There are both practical and status-conscious reasons for this imitation. The practical reasons are obvious for the faculty traditionally received a higher salary and more liberal benefits in the form of time off for research, etc. So the library desires these benefits, of course, but through the component of a faculty model, a mediator, or the Other. The librarian wants these things not just as librarian but as faculty – and rightfully so. Since the object of desire can only be obtained through the Other, by becoming the Other, we have the result of a divided consciousness. This puts us in somewhat of a bind which we usually manage to overcome, but sometimes with difficulty. We do go into the classroom, but, with exceptions, on a one time only basis; we do teach at the reference desk, etc., etc.. But in many cases this only leads us into what Max Scheler wrote about taking on models in his book Ressentiment: “the fact of choosing a model for oneself, to compare oneself with others is a common tendency” and all jealousy, all ambition, and even an ideal like the ‘imitation of Christ’ is based on such comparison. But as he goes on to say, the desire to emulate ends is a psychological self-poisoning caused by the block the model puts in the way of the disciple.” (Max Scheler, Ressentiment. New York,: Free Press, 1960; quoted in Rene Girard, Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure.. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1965, p. 14).

Tony Tanner interprets this in a Freudian/Lacanian framework:

The self, of course, realizes itself in relationships with other, and this realization takes place in either the realm of the Imaginary or the realm of the Symbolic, or both.... In the realm of the Imaginary, the self realizes itself in terms of identifications and oppositions with others, and in this way becomes alienated from itself into an image or an object. It realizes itself as a series of imaginary functions, and is, ... a “moi” based on mirages and misconstructions. The relationship between the “moi” and others is analogous to the slave-master relationship as first described by Hegel... Or the self may enter into the realm of the symbolic (which is governed by the Other, the phallus, the signifier) and comes to realize itself in terms of similarities and differences. (Tony Tanner, Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression . Baltimore: John Hopkins, p. 95)

This all goes by way of saying that the block put in the way of librarians attaining an “ontologically healthy desire” or an integrated consciousness for their profession is the research and publication requirement for attaining tenure and promotion. Now I take it for granted that librarians will sufficiently fill the requirements of the other two legs of the stool, so I will concentrate on publications in this discussion.

When librarians professionalized they had to build a knowledge base – a scholarly

discipline. The base was extremely narrow, which erected a block to acceptance on a scholarly professional basis. The base stressed form rather than content and was primarily technical and bibliographic. Focusing on the narrow rather than on a deep and broad body of available knowledge usually does not lead to rigorous or imaginative problem solving. This lack of depth places the discipline in a distinctly disadvantageous role in the more substantive academic arena and can lead itself to dominance, subjection and control by methodologically more rigorous disciplines and their populations.

In addition, librarians in most academic and research libraries are placed in many positions without regard to subject expertise, if indeed it is required. It was just happenstance, and serendipity, that two of my first publications were on African Americans and the Irish in the Maryland Penitentiary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When these were published in the late 1970s I had little idea that I would be at John Jay, where the penitentiary really matters as an academic subject for research. Real status and rewards in a university are based initially on mastery over a subject. As we know, productive scholars carry an elite status in the university – their rewards are based on this mastery and indeed the mystification of this expertise: the wizard syndrome. Initiation into this special cult entitles the member to the special privileges of tenure. In other words, their status is based on the restriction of their knowledge to outsiders. To break in, one must demystify the wizards.

In more pedestrian, administrative terms, when we discuss scholarly productivity in the large, College-wide Personnel Committee, we say “focused” research or research agenda. But the perception of the librarian’s knowledge base has certainly not been a mystification, except for, perhaps, our in-depth understanding of technological information databases and the manipulation thereof. However, our broader base of knowledge, is, I believe, an asset in our journey to the rewards of academia – tenure and promotion.

Publishing is not necessarily built into the librarian’s culture. Many, if not most, don’t possess the Ph.D. degree which, if it does anything, programs the scholar with the methods and culture of research from the dissertation process. Let us not discuss quality here, but the Ph.D. dissertation does, if nothing else, supply grist for the initial publication mill. So, many of us start out at a disadvantage, especially when the 29 or so non-librarians on the College Personnel Committee start looking at your records when you come up for tenure and promotion. I have worked with CUNY Tenure and Promotion Committees for parts of three decades, first at Lehman in the 1980s and now at John Jay since 1995, with a break in between for a stint in government service in Washington. I do know that most Personnel Committee members judge candidates on their files, which include publications. They don’t know them any other way. And when these professional records are discussed I believe I have been successful in going post-modern on librarian publishing productivity in arguing for “disciplinary relativity.” And this argument holds for professional disciplines other than librarians, such as Counselors, Physical Education faculty, Social Work, Education faculty, etc. In other words, every discipline presents scholarship equal to the standards of its own field and each does not require the same type of publications. Simply put, one standard doesn’t fit all; we don’t compare apples with oranges. And we never forget the heavy librarian workload relative to the “classroom

faculty.” But publications are still important, and nobody I know ever got tenure without them. So as Lenin asked in one of his ranting pamphlets, ‘What is to be done?’

My other colleagues on this panel will discuss opportunities for scholarly growth through grants, released time, and mentoring, but I have to mention some of them for the purposes of this dialogue. Obviously the first two, grants, and research time are significant for providing opportunities for publishing. But we as colleagues and supervisors have to encourage our librarians to publish, provide opportunities and to create a positive research culture in the library. For instance, in all my years in CUNY I don’t think I have ever denied a reassignment leave, nor have I noticed resentment on the part of librarians towards those who have taken them. We try to reserve these fellowship leaves for younger librarians – those who are going for tenure -- but it is not unknown for a full Professor to take one for a significant research project. We, as librarians, usually go into the profession because we want to provide information to our patrons. Our readers come first. But to continue serving this mission in our academic setting we need tenure, and to gain tenure we need to publish. I hope I make this very clear to every non-tenured librarian.

Also, I believe it is my job, as well as that of my senior colleagues, to aid as much as possible in librarians getting published. We can achieve this task in a number of ways. In some instances, when possible, we should emulate scientists, both social and physical, when they take on junior co-authors for their journal articles. We can certainly arrange for our non-tenured faculty to work on some of our projects that lead to publication. Many of us have developed enough contacts in certain disciplines that we can recommend our colleagues as authors of articles. I have done this numerous times with encyclopedias when I served on the editorial board or when I was the editor. We can also help them place articles in journals in whatever field they want to publish. But our broad focus on the whole universe of knowledge, as I mentioned before, plays in our favor. We can literally publish on any subject, so long as it is published in a respectable journal, book, reference work, etc. We are not expected to have the narrow focus of other disciplines. An historian, for instance, can’t get away with publishing fiction, or something on popular science. Bibliography and information technology is a natural for librarians, and we can publish on these fields. John Jay librarians are not expected to publish on criminal justice, but it certainly doesn’t hurt. For the colleges with broader curricular mandates, however, the world is at their doorstep. I have not yet seen a librarian turned down for tenure because of lack of publications in library or information science.

I take it upon myself to make sure that non-tenured librarians are given every encouragement to publish enough to attain tenure. The publication is what makes them whole in the eyes of the rest of the college’s faculty and gives them equal stature as faculty. And by and large that has worked here at John Jay. Librarians are treated in every way as equals and I believe they have achieved that ontologically healthy desire. But I also believe that the most important thing I and my colleagues can do is to create the atmosphere that is conducive to research. We must give our non-tenured librarians every opportunity to publish and to conduct research. Once the librarian receives tenure then, I feel promotion is optional. What I mean is that I will do everything in my means to keep a good librarian and see that s/he gets tenure. I

cannot do the same for promotion except encourage it – and I do. But it takes the will and desire to rise through the ranks where publications are necessary criteria. Again, I will do everything possible to help our library faculty to publish for promotion, but without internal motivation, not much will happen. It's similar to reform and rehabilitation. We give opportunities, but without the individual will, there is little reform. But classroom faculty face a similar situation after receiving tenure. I also feel that one of the great incentives to publish comes after an author sees his/her name in print for the first time. And when these publications receive some recognition, like tenure, perhaps we can unify the consciousness and if it cannot become happy, and least it can be content.