

## SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT FOR LIBRARY FACULTY

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I have been asked to comment on how service—departmental, college, university, community and professional-- can help library faculty advance professionally. While it has always been my understanding that a certain amount of service was expected for reappointment, tenure and promotion, I was under the impression that it was of marginal importance in the grand scheme of things. However, I was somewhat surprised to discover that not only is it expected, but it is clearly mandated in the qualifications and criteria for reappointment, tenure and promotion by the *Statement of the Board of Higher Education on Academic Personnel Practice in the City University of New York* and the *CUNY Board of Trustees Bylaws*. These two primary governing documents define both our jobs as CUNY faculty and specify what criteria we must meet if we intend to keep our jobs as library faculty.

Service alone will not be enough to get anyone through the reappointment and tenure process, but no service record can be potentially harmful to your career. It is first important to get a read of how service is viewed on your campus—it does seem to vary according to local campus priorities. Your department chair should be able to give you clear guidance in this regard and should, in fact, help you prioritize your service commitment and protect you if necessary.

While at a CUNY senior college I was led to believe that service was nice, but not that important; it was your record of scholarship that was the most important area to focus on. However, at Hostos, a community college with more of an emphasis on teaching than scholarship, there is serious scrutiny over a candidate's service record—not only the quality of the service record, but evidence of actual work done on any committees a candidate reports to have served on. The emphasis is on the importance of new faculty becoming a part of the life of the college. They like to see that you are participating in college life and making a contribution to it in some measurable way. Moreover, they actually look for evidence of community service, a requirement that was never mentioned at the senior college, but a kind of service that is noted specifically in the CUNY documents noted above.

What constitutes service in CUNY? If you are new to CUNY you may be asking yourself this question long about now. First, service can be categorized into five basic areas—service to your department, your college, the university, the profession and the community. Moreover, there are several kinds of service, each of which can fall into one of these categories.

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• BOT BYLAWS:  
• Section 11.7 A. Position Definition.  
• "It shall be the responsibility of  
• instructors, assistant professors...to  
• perform teaching, research and  
• guidance duties. They shall also, among  
• other things, be responsible for  
• committee and departmental  
• assignments. They shall perform those  
• administrative, supervisory, and other  
• functions as may be assigned by the  
• appropriate college or university  
• authorities."  
•  
• Section 11.6 Qualifications:  
• ..."willingness to cooperate with others  
• for the good of the institution"  
•  
•.....

Service done as part of your primary job assignment—it counts, but it doesn't demonstrate additional effort “for the good of the institution”—these are the committees that you are assigned to serve on by your chair to represent the college or the department. Examples include service on CUNY-wide Aleph committees, like the Serials, Public Service or Circulation Committees.

Elected committee positions—you usually run for these, thus are nominated and voted into office to serve a term. This implies additional effort on your part, as you have to agree to be nominated and run. Examples include service on Senate committees, and departmental governance committees.

Committees you are asked or appointed to serve on that may not be specifically related to your job description—special assignment and task forces, search committees, etc. Honors Committee, CPE or WAC Committee, Title V Grant Steering Committee.

Committees or projects that you initiate and volunteer—these should be discussed with your supervisor to insure you are not over committing yourself. Examples include serving as a faculty advisor for a student club, mentoring students, marshalling at graduation.

Professional Service—this is service and work on professional committees like LACUNY, ALA, ACRL etc. While work of this sort can fall into the service area, it is more likely to be useful in the area of professional growth and development. It can be evidence of the fact that your work is being acknowledged beyond your immediate community, which goes to scholarship and professional growth and development.

**Statement of the Board of Higher Education on Academic Personnel Practice  
in the City University of New York  
(Effective January 1, 1976)**

**First Reappointment**

(iii) Service to the Institution - Since all full-time faculty members share broad responsibilities toward the institution, work in departmental and college committees should be considered in over-all evaluations. Although it is understood that not all junior faculty members will have an opportunity to serve on important committees, their evaluation should consider evidence of their informal contribution to such committee work and their participation in other regular administrative activities such as governance, registration, advisement, library and cultural activities.

(iv) Service to the Public - A candidate, though not expected to do so for the first reappointment, may offer evidence of pertinent and significant community and public service in support of reappointment.

**Second and Subsequent Reappointments**

(iii) Service to the Institution - Effective service on departmental, college, and university committees.

(iv) Service to the Public - Institutions of higher education are expected to contribute their services to the welfare of the community. Although such activities are a matter of individual discretion and opportunity, evaluation of a faculty member for reappointment should recognize pertinent and significant professional activities on behalf of the public. The absence of this contribution should not work to the disadvantage of any candidate for reappointment.

**Tenure**

c) Service to the Institution - The faculty plays an important role in the formulation and implementation of University policy, and in the administration of the University. Faculty members should therefore be judged on the degree and quality of their participation in college and University government. Similarly, faculty contributions to student welfare, through service on committees or as an advisor to student organizations, should be recognized.

d) Service to the Public - Service to the community, state and nation, both in the faculty member's special capacity as a scholar and in areas beyond this when the work is pertinent and significant, should be recognized.

When agreeing to serve on committees and projects and trying to identify which category it falls into, try to think of it in terms of who would be benefiting from this work – the department, the college or the university. If, for instance, you are serving on a high profile ALA committee that is doing visible work being recognized nationally, then you may be bringing prestige to your college and the university.

*Benefits of Service:*

- Increased visibility for you and the library department.
- Networking contacts—it is important to know people on campus and for people to know you. You really get to know your colleagues by serving on committees together.
- Opportunity to become more familiar with the college and/or the university—how it works, policies and procedures, political hot buttons, who’s who, hot topics.
- Increase the library’s role in college-wide governance and decision-making.
- Committee connections can lead to publication and collaboration opportunities with your colleagues.
- Contribute to making the library department an integral, and invaluable, part of the life and mission of the college.
- Promote the library’s agenda in key arenas and work to get library initiatives included in key college documents—strategic plans, core curriculum, etc.
- Contribute to your department’s efforts to make your library an institutional priority.
- Develop and hone your administrative and organizational skills.
- Potential to get involved and become a key player on major initiatives of the college or university.
- Enhance image of library faculty and that of faculty status for librarians.
- Make significant contributions to the college or university that can have an impact of lives and the education of the students.
- Fill out your CV with worthy additions, representing a good solid body of work done to better your department, the college or the university.

*Things to keep in mind...*

- Choose your committee assignments wisely in consultation with your supervisor.
- Don't over commit yourself to too many committees and projects- while it may be flattering to be asked to serve on some committees, at times you will have to say No.
- Examine and choose your service based on your specific job description and strive for some overlap—so you don't feel pulled in too many different directions.
- Do service work that interests you that will benefit your career trajectory. Look for opportunities to learn new things that will enhance your professionalism and skill set.
- Be accountable—if you slack off and don't do anything people will know; it will get around. If it looks like it's going to be a committee that does nothing, try to take some initiative and think in terms of measurable outcomes—something you can show for your work at the end of it.
- If you are new to the college or the committee, listen at first to get a feel for the committee and the other members before taking a leading role.
- Always remember that you are representing your department or your college and how you behave and present yourself will reflect back on the department and your immediately colleagues.
- Don't be afraid to be a leader and take initiative; however, don't over- volunteer and get over committed.
- Keep your colleagues informed of what you are doing. We can respect and appreciate the contributions of our colleagues better when we know what they are doing. Report back to your department and your committee work and get input as needed.