

## Individual Questions & Comments from CSU Library Assistants- Via Email

This is a summary of responses, comments, recommendations and suggestions from Library Assistants systemwide to the proposed Library Assistant Series Review. Individual campuses are not identified, if the writer listed a job title or classification level, they have been included. The overall tone was unsatisfactory. Primary concerns are the lack of career ladder, pending demotions, lack of description for technical service functions and job duties, lack of education verses experience, omission of higher functioning levels (LA V, VI) and lack of a pay-scale. When possible, ideas and recommendations gathered from these emailed comments have been incorporated into the CSEA draft document.

### Emailed Comments and Observations:

#### **LA III- Bibliographic Services, Monographic Cataloger:**

- sounds too much like old one
- doesn't address technology changes
- no education/experience requirements beyond H.S. diploma and 1 yr. library exp. for first level
- technical services duties left out of III and IV levels
- some LA's are doing jobs currently done by librarians on some CSU campuses, such as: mono/serial original cataloging, budgets, collection development, etc., and this isn't really addressed. They have much higher level of responsibility.
- library-wide computer system responsibilities not mentioned, such as: Web masters, III systems gurus (Create Lists, setting up codes and tables) that make the system usable for patrons and staff
- appears to demote III's to II's
- language is low level, High School, not college vocabulary

Currently Library Assistants do jobs ranging in responsibility from checking materials in and out at the circulation desk to running whole departments and reporting directly to the Dean or Asst. Dean.

Levels are determined by asking: who determines your workflow and priorities? do you handle exceptions/novel situations or refer them to someone higher? do you make policy? how much responsibility do you have? what happens if you make mistakes? how do you gain new skills?

LA I's generally do rote work with few or no exceptions. They generally don't decide what their daily assignments are. When exceptions occur, they refer them to someone higher or use specific procedures to address them. They have lower levels of responsibility, and higher levels of supervision and should they make a mistake, someone higher will usually find them. (H.S.. + 1 yr. lib exp/2 yrs college) Examples: Check-in/out of library materials; cataloging of new materials that have been previously cataloged by DLC and for which there are existing complete and accurate records in OCLC or another bibliographic utility; ... (add more examples here)

LA II's do slightly more difficult work, with clearly defined exceptions which they handle using some discretion, along with clear procedures. The more unusual exceptions are still referred to a

higher level. They are generally assigned work by their supervisor. They have moderate levels of responsibility and moderate levels of supervision. Should they make a mistake, someone at a higher level will usually find them, but not necessarily in a timely fashion. (2 yrs lib exp.)

Examples: Cataloging of new materials that have been previously cataloged by another library and for which there are existing complete and accurate records in OCLC or another bibliographic utility, which only require verification against existing authority files and local call numbers; checking in of periodical subscriptions; ... (add more ex. here)

LA III's do more difficult work and routinely use existing procedures and reference tools to make decisions on exceptions. They only refer those exceptions for which they can't find solutions. They have more latitude in deciding on their own workflow, although they still have areas/assignments/deadlines for which they are responsible. They may report to another LA or to a librarian. Should they make a mistake, it may not be found for an extended length of time, and may have untoward consequences for the library or its patrons. They are responsible for learning new techniques or suggesting changes to procedures, and may train others. (4 yrs lib exp.) Examples: Cataloging of new materials that may have been previously cataloged by another library, but for which there are existing incomplete or inaccurate records in OCLC or another bibliographic utility. These records need extensive updating or corrections in order to be used. In some cases, a completely new record is created and uploaded to a bibliographic utility for use by other libraries worldwide. Cataloging of online resources or foreign language materials that require special cataloging rules using existing OCLC records. Billing patrons for missing materials and handling complaints. Setting up rules/tables in online catalogs in order to allow full functionality.

LA IV's do even more difficult work, and routinely handle novel exceptions. They may supervise other LA's or may be doing very high-level technical work. They have little direct supervision, and high levels of responsibility. They generally determine their own priorities and workflow. In some libraries, their jobs are being done by librarians. Any mistakes they make are unlikely to be found in a timely fashion, and may be costly to the library. (6 yr. lib exp.) Examples: Cataloging of new materials for which there are no existing records. Creating completely new records for uploading to a bibliographic utility for use by other libraries worldwide. (more examples)

LA V's do the most difficult work and their jobs are often done by librarians in other libraries. They often report directly to the Dean or Asst. Dean. They have responsibility for broader areas, with multiple subsections or they are responsible for very highly technical assignments. They have no direct supervision and high levels of responsibility. They may set policy for the whole library, and routinely determine procedures for those they supervise. Examples: Supervising Technical or Public Services departments, including hiring/evaluating/firing employees. High-level original cataloging or cataloging of difficult materials. Webmaster for library's Web page. Systems coordinator.

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**Library Assistant II**

1. The overall LA classifications and descriptions seem WORST than previous editions; the total lack of any detailed mention of computer skills, software knowledge, or specialized technical status is stunning. It's like it's 1960 all over again.

2. The layout of library “core” functions seem to be dated (often a Serials/Cataloging function can be in a “public sector” area of the library such as Government Publications) and it appears they’re listed in some “hierarchy” order (a LA II in Special Collections does important things whereas similar duties are easy and a LA I for Circulation); Circulation/ILL is “easier” than Special Collections.
3. I have no bearing or feeling of what a skill level is ...use of the word “Ability” would seem to say you have the ability to do this or that, whereas “Responsibility” is subjective and up to the library supervisor of that section to say “Jane is not responsible for that, Rhonda is” where as both have same abilities and skills.
4. The heart of the matter is this: within all these “Position Skill Levels” are key words that allows the given supervisor to use such wording to prevent a person from promotion (“You don’t supervise any student workers although you are in charge of our Circulation”) or to promote (“You, John, are now in charge of Circulation and thus I see you as a LA III”).

If reclassifications, USING THESE GUIDLELINES AS WRITTEN, were put before a neutral trio of judges, I believe with our own Library the promotions (reclasses) and de-motions (lowering a class/skill level) would be shocking. Several members would be promoted because they fit even these vague guidelines, whereas others would be brought into question as to how much responsibility they really take on—and how much they avoid.

#### SUMMARY:

These guidelines are very poorly written and more vague than the older series. But the crux of the matter is that [promotions]/reclassifications are too often based upon personal visions of a given supervisor’s own version of what a LA II or LA III should or can do. If you’re a LA II and desire to convince your supervisor that your work is now 51% into the next classification level, you won’t. She/he convinces himself/herself long before any classification form is submitted. And once a supervisor nixes a change, no one in upper links of the Library Chain will reverse it. It is all-arbitrary.

When one points out to a Supervisor during such a reclassification that of the 10 LA II in the Library, three have this much responsibility and these seven have little responsibility in maintain the catalog, the answer is—everyone is different, every department is different.

Reclassifications-- using this guidelines or newer fancy ones--- come down to this:  
 “It’s who you know, not what you know.”

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 Our lib director was surprised that there weren't new levels V and VI added.  
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The **Trainee position** - "Upon the completion of the training, the trainee... will the successful completion of the training, (based on the Typical Qualifications) be determined how, evaluation? At what level "satisfactory or "very good" will the re-class be automatic with the successful completion of the training or will the trainee have to go through the reclassification process?

**Core Functions:**

Circulation - this campus is turning accounting dept's function to circulation reserves - this is part of circulation copyright requirements not done by staff

**Classification Overview:**

What is meant by discrete tasks?

**Position Skill Levels:**

Often the need for a higher position is determined primarily by the work being performed and not "need for a position"

**Questions:**

Is the attempt to broadband the levels as what was done in IT Series?

When if ever can we look for growth, LA V + or would we move into the upper level of the Administrative Series.

We could possibly demand more money for the various levels if we required degrees instead of in-lieu of education, using service time. Starting with the LA II, (AA) and LA III (BA up) that degree could be in various fields that required writing, general math, etc. Maybe CO would take us seriously, if we were making educational requirements, for it appears that the responsibilities are more complex. I think we should consider an exempt position at least for the LA IV Leads. Where is room for growth, financially and career?

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**Library Assistant II-Acquisitions**

My overall comment is that it currently makes little difference whether we stay with the Library Assistant series or move to the Library Services Specialist series \*if we don't get merit increases\*!!!!!!

1. One stays where one is for years because the State will not reinstitute merit increases, and we can't move up within our classifications. What incentive do I have to do a good (or better) job? Why should it take ten years or more for a good employee to reach the top of their classification? UC is required to give merit increases, \*even if there is no money\*, because the workers are considered a priority. What message does this send to the employees of the CSU? Morale is very poor, and I can't see what reason any staff member would have to stay in a system that treats them with so little respect. Administrators and faculty receive regular and sizable increases. Why not staff?????

2. My complaint about the current structure of the Library Assistant series was always that it was too flat. With the wide variety of responsibilities performed by the LAs, it shortchanges us by lumping most people into broad categories. UC has Library Assistants I through V, so why is CSU lower? (And why is CSUN one of only 2 campuses in the whole CSU system without an LA IV? This clearly is not right.) The suggested Library Services Specialist (LSS) is almost worse. It assigns Librarian responsibilities to some LSS categories, most notably in Communications. This will not go over well with the Librarians' union. Nor will it go over with

staff workers who are yet again assigned more responsibilities for which they are not compensated. The skill level draft definitions are naively written. A current LA I is doing LSS II level work, an LA II is doing LSS III level work, etc. I hardly think we'll all be reclassified upward if the proposed change is approved. These draft definitions are a patronizing jumble. They seemingly are written by someone with no familiarity whatsoever with the level of knowledge and technological sophistication needed to perform libraries duties. Libraries are the backbone of instruction and research. Without libraries, a university cannot pretend to succeed in its mission. Libraries would cease to exist without the work of the Library Assistants. It would be nice if someone in the CSU hierarchy would realize that.  
Thank you.

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**Library Assistant I – Approval Supervisor**

What good does it do to Library Assistants to get a fancy title if it means more responsibilities but no financial compensation? Some of us that have been in the system for decades have had to go through staff cuts or staff freezes; in the nineties, we had ONE COST OF LIVING RAISE, and before then, there were other instances when for two to three years in a row we had no raises, including a merit raise.

Then it came the "famous" PSI award raises that, on the first year that it was implemented, only a few library staff favorites got it, and I mean GOT IT! The pool of favorites was so small, that some got up to 8% salary increases!!!

Our morale is at its lowest. State employees have to worry every fiscal year whether or not any type of raise will be granted to us, while City and County employees get regular raises; oh, but State Administrators don't have to worry about getting compensated for the work that they do.

I am a Library Assistant I; during the years of PSI awards, and later on, merit raises, I only got a less than 2%, PSI award. I have been working in the library for the past 29 years and nearly 10 months; I am in charge of the Approval Unit (weekly book shipments) with the responsibility of having new shipments up for review (the review is done by librarians) every week. I order online every book that comes in the approval shipments, and delete all of the bibliographers book selections that duplicate our library holdings.

I have been involved in learning the Bindery procedures, in fact, I wrote the first procedures in this area. My involvement started months before the Library Assistant in charge of this Unit got ill. My supervisor volunteered my time to help, not only with the workload, but also the training of student assistants and other staff members. I was also trained to check-in periodicals, order firm order selected titles; the ordering of firm titles is done by an LAII and her staff.

More than three years ago, the Order Supervisor went on a four-month leave; I assisted my supervisor to do the ordering of these more complex materials (I also assisted her when the same supervisor quit her job two years ago). But even after all the student

assistants and staff members (I lost count) that I have trained, including my current supervisor about 18 years ago, only the LAIII that was in charge of Bindery nine years ago, has given me an OUTSTANDING EVALUATION.

It is very frustrating to see that although I get very nice comments in my evaluations from my current supervisor, I cannot convince her with my skills, knowledge of library procedures and willingness to help anyone that needs my assistance when my workload is lighter than usual, what an outstanding employee I am.

What would supervisors do without the lowest paid employees? By the way, currently, I am more than \$2,100 short of what an LAI should be making per year (I have been an LAI for the past 11 years).

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The new descriptions more accurately describe what we really do (computer technology, more complex tasks and workflow, public service, etc), BUT there isn't yet any information about the pay scale being changed to reflect the increase in responsibilities and skill levels. Is a review of the pay scale part of the series review or not?

Regarding the "Position skill level III" description, the 12th one on the list of bulleted items -- the one that starts "Ability to prepare written..." it seems that this could easily mean giving presentations to GROUPS of patrons, even classes, and sounds like the Bibliographic Instruction that librarians do. This should be in the Level IV area not the Level III. Or maybe it shouldn't be in the LSS arena at all.

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My first impression of the series is that, more responsibilities are being assigned, but the compensation is not. Also I do not see an LA-V - for the growth of current LA IV to move up too.

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**LA IV – Access Services**

Some items to consider:

1. There was no mention of those positions that also have building maintenance responsibilities
2. With the way the document is written, how do they propose staff advance
3. Should education be given a leg up in lieu of experience/credit

I feel that the lead positions could eventually hurt the entire series. They need to place equity in the work done by library assistants, in most LA positions the trend seems to cross over into what the librarians do.

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After looking over the draft classification for the new Library Services Specialist I have a few concerns. The position skill levels seems to put more difficult job functions on lower classifications. I have a concern that with these positions being broader would make it more difficult for staff to achieve a reclassification. I have been a Library Assistant for 30 years in

both Public Services and Technical Services. I have found that the positions in Technical Services are much more complex than Public Services. I think these areas some how should be under different classification standards. The staff in our Cataloging department has virtually taken over all the duties previously only performed by Librarians. I also feel that the position skill levels should go beyond Level IV. I had talked to our University Librarian and was under the impression that they were considering a Level V and possibly VI.

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In the prior meeting with the Chancellor's Office it was stated that the Library Directors saw a need for this change and that salary increases and an expansion of the LA levels (1-2 additional levels).

But apparently the CO has obviously other goals in mind. So much for wanting to see us have a higher pay scale and to be paid for the work we do.

The new series does reflect that LA's are doing more detailed and difficult work that was once done by librarians. The series draft also reflects that they just moved the job descriptions for each level down one level and added more Librarian responsibilities to the LA IV level. So I my interpretation is that instead of paying us more they just upgraded the requirements of the positions and left the pay the same and in some cases (probably most) the LA no longer qualifies for a position they are in and sees no upward mobility available.

Is there going to be levels such as in the IRT series (Foundation, Career, Expert)? How will these be set up within the levels?

What is the purpose of this new series, if not to move us forward???

There should be levels above a IV or the LA series will continue to remain stagnant.

There are a lot of LA III's that do extremely technical work without supervising any students or staff. They work independently on detailed assignments within a unit and are continually expanding their knowledge to acquire the tools of the trade needed to keep up with the changes in library work.

In our university a IV is a supervisor of a unit. A III may do the same work but does not supervise staff.

I would also like to see a firm division between public services staff and technical services staff (the apple and oranges of the series); they (public services) are unfairly evaluated when compared to technical services staff and their duties and responsibilities.

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With all due respect, this draft does not accurately describe what we actually do! I may be a newbie but as I read it, all this does is make it harder to re-class and advance. Why was there no

pay schedule attached? Are we talking more money? I thought there was talk of an LA-V and LA-VI. My job is very specific and technical, nothing to do with public services, and to be honest, a lot tougher. A person should make more money when the technical degree of their job increases.

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**Bibliographic Control Coordinator:**

Re Position Skill Level IV: I think the emphasis on responsibility for overall operation of a "large" library unit is misguided, as it does not take into account the complexity of the unit; i.e., a small, but complex unit may require Level IV. For example: Managing a small unit (i.e., small number of staff) within Technical Services that has responsibility for cataloging of all formats, authority control, database maintenance, physical processing and repairs, but which does not include acquisitions functions, should still be at LEVEL IV, given the complexities of the work, the need for continuing education, knowledge of and adherence to national (and, in some cases, international) standards, etc. That is, Level IV does not need to include overall operation of all of technical services within a library.

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**Senior Monograph Cataloger:**

After reviewing the document, I was left with the feeling that the cataloging and bibliographic control functions were glossed over and simplified. The draft focuses primarily on public functions and does not adequately address cataloging functions. Cataloging is the foundation for the provision of information. Organization of library materials and authority control are key functions in cataloging and bibliographic control, which in turn facilitate access of materials.

Catalogers rely on more than OCLC and its utilities to acquire a depth of cataloging knowledge. We must consult many print and online sources, and interpret rules in order to perform complex cataloging tasks. The development of cataloger's judgment requires time and experience.

I hope that the next document includes more details about the complexity of cataloging functions. Will we receive a summary of the responses to the draft? It would be nice to know what other LAs think.

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**LA 22 years-Government Publications and Maps Division**

After reading the LA classifications from the Chancellors Office (and working on comments), I would like a clearer definition of the following terms, as used in our Library:

**DUTY, ABILITY, and RESPONSIBILITY**

Using the 51% work load "Responsibility" factor for an employee to be in a given class, I would interpret that the person "Responsible" for a given task (say summary holdings or downloading proper records) certainly could delegate these tasks out to supporting workers, but that person should be "Responsible" for any and all affects of those actions on the PAC.

It seems to me, (and I do not know if this is library wide but I suspect so), employees responsible for a given area (and classify accordingly) delegate tasks and that responsibility on lower classified individuals. Thus, comes about "we all need to be responsible for this...." or "You did not do this correctly..." [We all are the same/we all have the same responsibility]. Which, to me, seems to circumvent the whole strategy of a higher class is responsible for more complex duties/or/tasks.

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Please push, push, and push for individual reclassification decisions to be "grievable" through CSEA!

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