

**CSU, Sacramento Library Staff's Response to
Library Services Specialist-Draft Classification Standards**
Code: TECHNICAL LETTER HR/PCOS 2002-01

The Library Staff at the California State University, Sacramento, have concerns about the Library Assistant Classification Study, both in its process and with the resulting "Library Services Specialist-Draft Classification Standards." An Ad Hoc committee of the Library Staff was formed to gather staff's concerns which had been expressed during staff meetings and to submit them during the short time available for response. The committee gathered written comments (See Appendix) as well as verbal responses to the draft document.

The following issues were brought up both in the written comments received and in verbal responses to the survey expressed during meetings of Library staff dealing with the subject.

- **Survey Process**

Concerns were raised when the survey was first introduced that may have affected the response rate and the candidness of the responses to the survey. These concerns centered on the possible repercussions from supervisors, due to the lack of anonymity, as well as the need to have a supervisor "sign-off" on the document before it was submitted. This may have discouraged some staff from responding to the survey and may have limited the scope of the responses that were submitted. The secrecy of the entire process was also an issue. It appears that most of the work on this draft/document has been done behind the scenes with staff given limited involvement, although they are the most affected by the outcome.

- **Career Progression and Pay Equity**

The staff members also had concerns with the ambiguity of the language within and between the levels of the Classification Series and the Librarian Faculty positions. At our library, the proposed position descriptions would limit the ability of Library Assistants to move up the career ladder beyond the Library Assistant III position. Librarians, not Library Assistants currently hold the duties described in the proposed Level IV position.

An issue of pay equity is raised if Library Assistant IVs are expected to do the work of librarians, as Library Assistant IVs make a significantly lower salary than Librarians. Another pay equity issue that our staff would like to see addressed is how Library Assistant Leads will be compensated in this proposed classification. Currently the "Lead" classifications earn less than their Library Assistant counterparts, although they are required to take on more responsibility.

- **Lead Responsibilities and Activities**

Lead activities in the newly proposed Library Services Specialists (LSS) Standards are specified for levels II-IV. However, it is unclear as to how the individual LSS in a level would gain the classification of a Lead and how the pay level would be distinguished from a non-lead position. In addition would there be an overlap within a Lead and the next level, e.g., could a LEAD LSS II overlap with a LSS III?

- **Recognition of Position Responsibilities Within a Single Unit**

The standards proposed minimize the technological and decision-making responsibilities involved in handling a single unit within the Library. The draft discusses the responsibilities of overseeing multiple units but ignores the enormous responsibility of overseeing the operations of a single unit. These proposed classifications do not recognize or compensate Library Assistants for keeping up with rapidly changing Library technology and the increasing demand for new services.

- **Education and Experience**

Library assistants may hold undergraduate degrees, associates degrees in a discipline or in library and information technology, or a degree in library and information science or information studies. Library assistants with degrees can and do play prominent roles within the library organization, e.g., cataloging within a particular subject area in which they have educational expertise. The proposed Library Services Specialists Standards are silent in reference to the educational and experience levels required for the skill levels and/or in-range progressions that could be possible as a result of the educational or experience demonstrated by the employee.

- **Blurring of responsibilities/duties of librarians and library service specialists – adding LSS V and LSS VI levels**

There has been an “up skilling” of the work of library service specialists/library assistants as a result of automation. Library service specialists working within units act as high level teams carrying out activities previously handled only by librarians. For example, the Heads of Circulation a decade ago were librarians. Today, this position is held most often by a library service specialist/library assistant. Today, the LSSs have increasingly exercised higher level management and administrative responsibilities. However, their pay scale has not reflected the increased responsibilities. Thus, the proposed skill levels, if they include the Heads of a Department such as Access Services or Technical Services should be expanded to include a Level V and level VI with corresponding lead activities and pay compensation.

- **Appropriateness of the Organizational and Operational Fit and 5-yr review of levels**

As emerging technologies continue to push the boundaries of the work performed by library service specialists/library assistants, clear work assignments and levels across a broad spectrum of public and technical service positions need to be established across the 23 campuses. The standards for the levels should recognize that the work of library assistants has assumed an increasingly important role in libraries. The administration of major functional areas in reference and information desk assignments, collections cataloging, acquisition, document delivery, interlibrary loan, circulation, reserves and a variety of other systems work has become part of their work.

The establishment of standards should also be accompanied by a system-wide five-year review process to ensure that LSSs are ranked according to the complexity, skills, and

knowledge-based requirements that they are performing. It is important to note that the higher skill/management levels may overlap with librarians.

- **Under valuation of library assistants**

From the proposed standards it appears that the work currently performed by LA IIIs and LA IVs has been downgraded and devalued. The scope of work described in the suggested series, states that a Library Assistant IV must be “responsible for a large library unit, often encompassing more than one functional area, such as overall access services or technical services and/or are involved in broader library planning functions and have a significant role in more complex library functions such as collection development and reference.” The duties of the suggested Library Assistant III position also include many of the duties of those currently classified as LA IVs. The scope of work detailed in the suggested skill levels for LA IVs parallels the work now being performed by librarians. The Head of Access Services, Technical Services, and Acquisitions are now all held by librarians at CSUS. To expect library assistants to perform the work of librarians at a lower pay scale is unreasonable.

APPENDIX

Individual/department written response to the proposed LA guidelines (Technical Letter HR/PCOS 2002-01) received by the Ad Hoc Committee

- LA's will have the inability to move through the career ladder after reaching LA III because our current library organizational chart does not reflect LA's as Head of Departments or multiple units (see p. 7 of 7: overall operation of a large library unit, often encompassing more than one functional area).

LA III and LA IV responsibilities and functions blur into position skill levels (see position description p. 6 of 7 and p. 7 of 7). Currently LA III's could be LA IV's but would not be able to because of language in the proposed LA IV classification.

How are Leads compensated for added responsibilities? Are salaries higher at the LA III vs. LA III, Lead or are they less. Currently, Lead makes less than the LA III-IV classification. Also if the intent for restructuring the LA series is to replace professionals will salary compensation be more in line with entry-level professional salaries?

Another concern, there is no consideration of a single unit such as Reference the continuous demand for added services and the requirement of LA's to perform at a higher level. Keeping up with technology and information and adding additional services within the single department does not recognized or compensated. LA's are expected to continue to take on more responsibilities but yet it is difficult to move up a career ladder. This ignored in the proposed document.

- There seems to be no mention of educational and experience standards/requirements associated with the different levels. Was this intentional? The current Classification and Qualification Standards does include these factors.

Also attachment B, page 2, the 6th paragraph (Acquisitions, Receiving and Bindery) has no mention of technology, which is heavily used. I suggest inserting the word: automated - in the third line between library and system.

Also in that same paragraph, suggest including an additional phrase: selecting bibliographic cataloging records from computerized database for use in ordering and cataloging items and the inclusion of such records in the library's on-line catalog. Possible insertion point: 2nd line after the words: specialized materials.

Also in that same paragraph, suggest inserting in current fourth line after the word "process" - and pay internally.

Also in that same paragraph in the current fifth line insert between the words "for payment" the word: campus.

Also on page 5 of the attachment, suggest adding within the first sentence, the phrase: or the purchasing of library materials (possibly after the words: interlibrary loans).

- Comments from an individual Department

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROPOSED LA GUIDELINES

Notwithstanding the goal to provide fair and equitable guidelines for the Library Assistant series, we perceive an undertone that downgrades and devalues the work currently performed by LA IIIs and LA IVs since the LAIs and IIs seem very similar to the current guidelines. The scope of work described in the suggested series, states that a Library Assistant IV must be “responsible for a large library unit, often encompassing more than one functional area, such as overall access services or technical services and/or are involved in broader library planning functions and have a significant role in more complex library functions such as collection development and reference.” The duties of the suggested Library Assistant III also include many of the duties of the currently classified IVs. The scope of work detailed in the suggested skill levels for LA IVs parallels the work now being performed by librarians. The Department Heads, of Access Services, Technical Services, and Acquisitions are now all held by librarians at CSUS. To expect library assistants to perform the work of librarians at a lower pay scale seems unreasonable.

Recent technological changes have produced complex, multidisciplinary jobs currently performed by LA III and LA IV leads. However, the current suggested guidelines do not take into account the rapidly changing technological environment and the skill needed to oversee a single library unit such as Circulation, Interlibrary Loan, or the Reserve Book Room. The Unit Heads in the Access Services Department work independently in determining priorities for their Units. They thoroughly investigate problems and have the responsibility and authority to make exceptions. They are required to keep abreast of nationwide initiatives through investigation into listservs and discussion with other Unit Heads throughout the CSUS system. They often represent the Units to other departments in the University, e.g., Payroll, the University Book Store, Cashiers Department, University Police, Accounting, etc. The Unit Heads are responsible for beta testing new software and for examining and recommending potential software products. They are responsible for explaining policies and settling disputes over disagreements that arise with users. They are responsible for carrying out investigations into their areas that may arise due to sexual harassment or racial intolerance, or theft of materials. They are responsible for the personnel supervision and training of staff and students. Often times the number of students supervised is substantial, 30 or more. They evaluate the work of their permanent staff and must resolve all problems that may arise, including hiring, evaluating performance, morale, conflict resolution, scheduling, work conflict, encouraging staff to learn new skills, professional development, teamwork, etc.

Their responsibilities are complex and poor judgment or decision-making has drastic consequences due to the substantial responsibilities they hold. Errors in preparing and monitoring budget reports, the improper training of staff, the inadequate scheduling of staff, and the unwillingness to make exceptions to policy are just a few examples of areas where poor judgment can have serious ramifications.

Faced with growing user populations and demands for more services, the Unit Heads are constantly challenged to rethink how their Units are managed and run. They also need to plan for changes in services due to new digital and electronic capabilities.

Their comprehensive knowledge of their areas as well as the library operations, their thorough knowledge of the library collection, their comprehensive knowledge of local, regional, state, and national standards in their Unit, and their expertise in using the library systems critical to their areas makes their skill levels clearly a Library IV. They have strong organizational skills and the ability to plan in long range planning.

The suggested guidelines prevent the LAs from moving up the career ladder given that the suggested duties are currently filled by librarians. To prevent LAs from being able to advance significantly destroys

morale and professional development. Given the vastly expanded jobs that are now performed by the heads of the Units, who are currently in the IV classification, it would be a travesty to not recognize the complexity of their jobs. The standards as currently proposed do not adequately cover the breadth of work performed, nor do they equitably classify the positions for the LAIII and IV series. In addition, the lead activities are ambiguous as written in the suggested guidelines.

We would propose that the job descriptions of the currently classified LAIII and IV lead positions be analyzed for the complexity of work performed. We would also recommend that the supervisors of these positions be interviewed to validate the responsibilities indicated.

The suggested guidelines raise significant questions and issues regarding three potential possibilities:

1. If the librarians are left as the Heads of the Departments, then the capability to advance beyond a LAIII is minimal;
2. If the librarians are no longer filling the Head of the Department positions, the work will be done by LAs at a lower rate of pay. It is important to recognize that Librarian Heads of Departments are not typically hired at a beginning librarian's salary rate, which might be comparable to the top rate of the LA series. If the rate of pay is not significantly increased for the LA IVs to reflect the complexity of the duties, then issues of equity would be raised;
3. If the Head of a Department, e.g., Access Services, were no longer a librarian, would the Head report to an Associate Dean or the Dean? This reporting structure might also raise pay equity issues, as the complexity of the job may even be more substantial.

One possible recommendation to consider would be to retain the current library series as written but expand the skill levels to include an LA V and/or VI. These proposed new skill levels could include the Head of a Department with appropriate monetary compensations and career development capabilities.

In addition to the review of the job skills, it is also time to re-evaluate the current pay scales of the existing LA IIIs, LA III Leads, LA IVs, and LA IV Leads. Currently the Leads make less, which is also a pay equity issue.