

## Why MSCF Library Faculty Matter

This document describes the discipline of Library/Information Studies and the work of library faculty at the 2-year community and technical colleges within the Minnesota State system. It defines the vital role faculty status plays in our ability to carry out our work, and the impact of that work on student success and retention on our campuses.

Library faculty directly impact student learning and research, other faculty's teaching, and college operations. The American Library Association (ALA) provides librarians with guidelines and standards for day-to-day work and continued professional development. Additionally, national and international standards guide the work performed by faculty librarians. A sampling of these guidelines and standards appears in the bibliography of this paper.

Library/Information Studies is unique among Minnesota State faculty disciplines in that it includes responsibility for the day-to-day operation of a library. This includes the planning and implementation of services that are integral to the success of students, faculty, and other college stakeholders. Library faculty must keep abreast of best practices and changes in many areas specific to library and information studies, from implementing library-specific technology to enforcing the ALA's Patron Bill of Rights for all library users to teasing out what a student needs during a reference interview. Our collective bargaining agreement recognizes this complexity and states in Article 11, Section 4, that a library and its services must be managed by faculty librarians.

MSCF library faculty are recognized as collaborative leaders within the Minnesota State system, across the state, regionally, and nationally. They are known as leaders in developing tools and services that ensure that all library users (students, faculty, and community members) develop lifelong critical thinking and content analysis skills. Librarians also help students use information ethically and effectively. As leaders in finding and evaluating information, library faculty utilize academic and instructional technologies to create and manage resources, as well as to deliver library and information services.

The minimum qualification of a MSCF library faculty member is a Master's degree in library and information science. Most institutions granting library and information science degrees maintain ALA accreditation, which guarantees program graduates demonstrate a standard set of competencies. The following is a representative list of those competencies that illustrates the range of specialized knowledge and skills library faculty possess.

- Foundations of the profession. This includes the role of library and information services in a diverse global society, the role of serving the needs of underserved groups, and the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians.
- Selection and organization of library materials and tools, in a wide range of formats, print, digital, virtual, etc.
- Adaptive technological knowledge and skills in a rapidly changing field.
- Provides of face-to-face and virtual research, instruction, and user services.
- Administration and management of library systems, staff, budgets, and resource and facilities planning.
- Teaching skills, especially related to information, information technology, and digital literacy.
- Promotion/marketing skills.

- Presentation skills.
- Instructional design skills.
- Curriculum knowledge and subject expertise.

**Core Functions of Library Faculty** To provide essential support to community and technical college students, library faculty perform a set of core functions through individual and group interactions, as well as classroom instruction. These functions are fundamental to the mission of community and technical college librarianship and are derived from standards set by the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association.

A large percentage of students enter college unprepared to engage in college-level academic research. This creates an intimidating environment for many lower-division undergraduate students. Two-year college library faculty must provide services, resources, and instruction specifically designed to educate and prepare lower-division undergraduate students to become self-sufficient researchers and lifelong learners. Due to their unique expertise, library faculty also contribute to campus conversations on complex issues, including copyright, privacy, and open access to information. The following is a list of some of the ways library faculty contribute to the functioning of our campuses and to student success and retention.

1. *Face to Face Classroom Instruction* – Across Minnesota State, library faculty offer a variety of different face to face classroom instruction model. They may offer coursework and instruction within the Information Studies discipline via stand-alone, credit-bearing courses and/or within learning communities. Library faculty could also provide instruction via units within first year experience courses. Additionally, library faculty offer traditional, targeted instruction in all disciplines, as guest instructors. All these types of library instruction involve teaching complex critical and higher order thinking skills and goes well beyond library demonstration. The faculty status of librarians is essential for performing this work.
2. *Online Instruction* - This may involve all of the examples contained within the face-to-face category, as well as being embedded within another discipline's online course, creation of online tutorials for distance students, and virtual instruction in real time.
3. *Reference/Research Services (in face-to-face, email, chat, and social media formats)* - Reference/research transactions are information consultations, both prearranged and at the reference desk, in which library faculty recommend, interpret, evaluate, and use resources to help users meet information needs. Examples range from the straightforward to the highly complex, including:
  - a simple question of whether or not the library owns a specific resource,
  - searching for resources in the greater community,
  - processing interlibrary loan requests,
  - identifying appropriate databases to search, based on the assignment and discipline,
  - helping students identify useful search terms that yield fruitful results,

- helping students frame and refine their research topic within a specific discipline, and
- helping students create correct citations and format papers based on the requirements of a specific discipline.

These services take place through multiple modes of delivery: the traditional face-to-face reference desk consultation; individualized appointment-based consultation; virtual research help services, including email, chat, and text message reference; and library's social media research help tools.

4. *Collaboration with Other Faculty* - Collaboration occurs in many forms and at many points throughout a semester. Our collaboration with other faculty is grounded in our knowledge of the college curriculum and aided by our faculty status. Additionally:

- Librarians often assist other faculty develop research assignments with clear assessable learning outcomes. Clarifying assignment expectations and outcomes with faculty enables librarians to better assist struggling students.
- Library faculty create online research guides that provide targeted resources useful to students in a specific class or discipline.
- Library faculty work as liaisons with disciplines and divisions to help build the library's print and digital collections to meet the needs of the curriculum.

The faculty status of librarians allows us to collaborate with other faculty as peers, which is critically important for developing the long-term relationships necessary to carry out the library's teaching and academic support mission.

5. *Collection Management/Development* - Developing useful electronic and print collections, and planning for and managing the format transition of collections to meet the information needs of students and faculty is a complex and time-consuming task. It requires that library faculty have an intimate knowledge of the overall college curriculum, department-level curriculum, and the research demands that individual departments make on library resources. Library faculty must also have an in-depth knowledge of the publishing and book vendor markets, and the large variety of book, journal, and electronic resource review tools. Library faculty also craft policies and make decisions related to the deselection and removal of resources considered no longer relevant to the collection.

Collaborative work with other departmental faculty, particularly in allied health fields, is necessary to assure collections are compliant with national accrediting agencies.

6. *Collection Organization/Metadata Work* - Organizing the various collections of the library requires complex knowledge of national and international metadata standards used by various professional organizations and database vendors. Library faculty must keep current on constantly evolving standards and provide oversight of the library's cataloging, indexing, and database management functions. They engage in the creation of original metadata records, and the enhancement of pre-existing records. In addition to the many types of resources that require metadata records in the traditional library catalog, librarians must also oversee and manage numerous vendor-created

electronic databases, as well as back-end systems that manage and integrate all of the library's electronic resources.

Additionally, faculty metadata librarians must have an intimate knowledge of the college's overall curriculum, departmental curricula, and individual faculty assignments. This knowledge is necessary for librarians to successfully create and implement metadata access points based on curricular needs. This ultimately links the library user to the materials they require to meet their current needs, be they physical or virtual materials. The faculty status of librarians plays a crucial role in our ability to do this work effectively.

7. *Budget and Facilities Planning* - Library faculty are responsible for developing comprehensive library staffing, resources, and facilities plans that meets the curricular needs of faculty and students. Library faculty are also active participants of college-wide and system-wide budget and facility planning processes.
8. *Promotion/Marketing* - Promoting library services and resources is an important function of library faculty. It's essential to let users know what is available to them, particularly when many of the users may not be familiar with libraries. As important as marketing is to students, library faculty also develop marketing skills to advocate for the importance of the library in student success and achievement to faculty and administration. Promotion of library programming can play an important role in attracting users to the library. The faculty status of librarians aids greatly in the promotion of library services to other faculty.
9. *Campus, System and Professional Committee work* - Library faculty share their professional expertise with peers and administration by serving on various college committees, including curriculum, facilities, technology, and shared governance. The knowledge they bring to the table is valuable when discussing many academic issues, including:
  - distance education,
  - academic achievement and retention,
  - collaborations with high schools, and
  - open educational resources.

They are also key players in Higher Learning Commission visits and reports, primarily in their role as providers of instruction for students and employees in the efficient utilization and evaluation of information and research in multiple formats and disciplines.

Libraries in the Minnesota State system are members of one or more consortia and the library faculty and staff serve on planning and governance committees within these consortia, providing informed, localized insight. As part of their professional service obligations, library faculty serve on committees locally, statewide and nationally.

10. *Library vendors* - Library faculty work closely with a large variety of book, periodical, and electronic database vendors to develop and manage the library's collections. To be successful in this role, library faculty must have an in-depth knowledge of the issues related to the publishing and database industries.

11. *Directing library support staff work* - Library faculty are responsible for the overall functioning of the library and the oversight of library services. They are responsible for developing library policies and are best equipped to determine how those policies are carried out in the work of staff and student workers. Because of the interrelated and interdependent work of library faculty and library support staff, it is essential that professional library faculty oversee and provide day-to-day direction to library staff and student workers. It is essential for the proper functioning of the library that library faculty are involved in the hiring, training, and oversight of library support staff. Library faculty may also be directly involved in the oversight and training of library student workers, or provide oversight to the library technicians that hire, train, and supervise student workers.

### **ALA Standards & Guidelines**

Association of College & Research Libraries. [Guidelines for Instruction Programs in Academic Libraries](#). Approved by the ACRL Board of Directors, June 2003. Revised October 2011.

Association of College & Research Libraries. [Guidelines for University Library Services to Undergraduate Students](#). Approved at ALA Annual Conference, June 2005. Revision approved October 2013.

Association of College & Research Libraries. [Standards for Distance Learning Library Services](#). Approved by the ACRL Board of Directors, July 1, 2008.

Association of College & Research Libraries. [Standards for Libraries in Higher Education](#). Approved by the ACRL Board of Directors, October 2011.

Committee on Accreditation. [Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies \(PDF\)](#). Adopted by ALA Council, January 2008.

Office for Intellectual Freedom. [Code of Ethics of the American Library Association](#). Adopted at the 1939 Midwinter Meeting by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 1981; June 28, 1995; and January 22, 2008.

Office for Intellectual Freedom. [Library Bill of Rights](#). Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

RDA Steering Committee (formerly the Joint Steering Committee in for the Development of RDA). [RDA: Resource Description and Access](#). 2010-

Reference and User Services Association. [Definitions of Reference](#). Approved by RUSA Board of Directors, January 14, 2008.

### **Additional Resources**

Head, Alison J. "Learning the Ropes: How Freshmen Conduct Course Research Once They Enter College." *ERIC*. Project Information Literacy, 04 Dec. 2013. Web. 19 Sept. 2016.  
<<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED548262.pdf>>.

"Position Statement on Student Services and Library and Learning Resource Center Program Support for Distributed Learning." *Position Statement on Student Services and Library and Learning Resource Center Program Support for Distributed Learning*. American Association of Community Colleges, 09 Feb. 2005. Web. 19 Sept. 2016.  
<<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/About/Positions/Pages/ps02102005.aspx>>.

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Submitted to Kevin Lindstrom, MSCF President, on September 22, 2016.

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