

Library Managers' Experiences on the Tenure Track

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Much has been written on tenure status among librarians due to the unique work responsibilities they have in comparison to other faculty across campus. This study explores one facet of work often unique to tenure-track librarians—long-term or permanent management responsibilities. In addition to gathering descriptive data about what type of managing work is being done on the tenure track, by whom and where, this study also analyzes how these roles and responsibilities impact one's success on the tenure track and vice versa, and how tenure-track work influences one's ability to manage. Eighty-seven librarians completed an online survey and the results show that, while there are some positives to being a manager while on the tenure track, including demonstrable leadership opportunities, most noted a lack of time to perform all required responsibilities in both areas. Other findings that emerged included a belief that managing did not count towards earning tenure and that other faculty colleagues, both in and out of the library, did not understand the full scope of managers' work. Recommendations include that library leaders consider if job roles with a heavy management focus should be tenure-track and if so, how tenure-track managers can be better supported and include their management responsibilities in promotion and tenure documentation.

Introduction

The tenure experience for any given librarian differs not only from non-librarian faculty, but also tenure-track librarians at other institutions and even from colleagues at one's own institution. Tenure requirements for librarians vary widely from institution to institution. There is also a marked difference between librarians' tenure expectations and those of traditional disciplinary faculty. Adding another level of complexity to the discussion of tenure-track status in librarianship is the myriad roles and responsibilities that a librarian may have. Tenure-track librarians may hold positions in public or technical services, which themselves have a multitude of functions that are far-ranging in scope. Librarians on the tenure track may also have supervisory or managerial responsibilities in addition to their primary duties—from managing resources and services to supervising staff and entire departments. Knowing that many academic librarians already find earning tenure in addition to performing their primary duties stressful,¹ how such

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additional managing roles impact one's ability to earn tenure remain unclear. This study's aim was to begin the exploration of tenure-track librarians with management responsibilities to better understand their work, their challenges, and possibly even the benefits of being a manager while also on the tenure track.

Literature Review

The unique and complicated issues that are involved with academic librarians on the tenure track have been well-documented in the literature. A particular focus has been on the support needed for librarians to be successful in earning tenure. Research and publication is often cited as the most challenging aspect of earning tenure for librarians.² As a result, the prevalence and need for research support services and resources for librarians on the tenure track is widely discussed. It is often noted that librarians struggle to find the time for research and that they experience a lack of administrative support and funding.³ Many believe the MLIS degree does not sufficiently prepare librarians to conduct original research by offering no or inadequate research methodology education.⁴ This leaves libraries struggling to find ways to get new tenure-track librarians up to speed quickly. Such studies document and encourage adoption of mentoring programs, writing groups, release time, and financial support for professional development needs to address these gaps.⁵

Mentoring as a support service is of particular focus in the literature. A 2013 survey of Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Directors found that 83.3% of tenure-granting academic libraries provided librarians with some form of mentoring.⁶ In their scoping review, Lorenzetti and Powelson analyzed 42 studies reporting on faculty mentoring programs within academic libraries. They identified four goals of mentoring programs, including orientation, professional development, promotion, and tenure.⁷ When investigating mentoring programs specifically for librarians on the tenure track, Goodsett and Walsh found most programs specifically focused on promotion and tenure.⁸ Peer mentoring in particular has seen a rise in recent years with a focus on supporting the research and publishing activities of junior faculty.⁹ In all of these studies, management roles were not selected as a variable for analysis and therefore, we do not know if managing librarians on the tenure track may face different challenges or need different forms of support.

Studies have also looked at the low morale, stress levels, and burnout likelihood among academic librarians. Cameron et al. looked specifically at the occupational stress level of tenure-track librarians and found an above average rate of job stress severity among respondents, primarily stemming from a lack of institutional support.¹⁰ Davis Kendrick found that tenure and promotion as a system, both being present or not in libraries, served as an enabler for low morale by creating problematic hierarchy, as well as encouraging librarians to keep tenured positions despite being unhappy in the job.¹¹ Shupe et al. found that librarians who experienced high role overload also experienced higher levels of stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction.¹² The specific roles of academic librarians in these and other studies were either not present or did not clearly include management roles outside of Library Administration, such as middle managers. In a time where almost 50% of academic librarians are experiencing burnout,¹³ it appears crucial to check in on the experiences of library managers who seem likely to have higher role overload than others, in addition to promotion and tenure expectations.

The omission of library managers from the tenure-related literature is problematic because, as Swan Hill points out, "Many library faculty positions carry administrative and

managerial functions (supervision, oversight, and evaluation) as a permanent and inextricable part of their duties.”¹⁴ Librarians can be responsible for the work of entire departments and campus-wide services. This differs from other academic departments where faculty seeking tenure generally work in a flat organizational structure and one is largely only responsible for their own teaching, research, and service. Non-librarian faculty may be elected or appointed to serve in an administrative position, such as chair of a department, but this typically happens only after achieving tenure plus full professor rank and is nearly always taken on a temporary basis.¹⁵ Those faculty also often receive additional compensation and time-release from other daily responsibilities to take on a management role. As a result, tenured faculty from other departments may not understand how integral management is to the practice of librarianship, how it may impact what a managing librarian’s scholarly output looks like, and why management should be reflected within a tenure application document.¹⁶

A study from 2019 surveyed the scope of work, roles, and responsibilities for academic librarians, both tenured and non.¹⁷ Surveys were completed for 28 institutions and administration, defined as “management of branch library/service/unit/staff/faculty,” was listed as the second most prevalent responsibility of tenure-track librarians at those institutions. However, their analysis of tenure documentation revealed no clear pathway for the inclusion of management responsibilities in tenure expectations and applications. In fact, the authors suspected there might be confusion occurring about whether management belongs in either the primary activity or service category. The lack of recognition by tenure documentation and policies is particularly worrisome given the large number of faculty librarians who have management, with all its time-consuming and non-research/teaching/service-related work, listed as part of their daily responsibilities.

Another study in 2006 looked at public service librarian opinions about job satisfaction as it related to job responsibilities, tenure, and education.¹⁸ When asked which job component was least important and least emphasized in achieving tenure, the most selected answer was management. Additionally, 73% of participating librarians (who had formal job descriptions) said publishing was the most important job component in achieving tenure, though only 9% of these same librarians stated that it was given matching weight within their actual job description. The over-emphasis on publishing has the potential to be particularly overwhelming for librarians with additional management responsibilities. In 2018, Hughes surveyed librarians who had transitioned into a tenure-track position.¹⁹ She found that while all librarians listed time management as a primary concern, those librarians in technical services and management positions stated that finding time for scholarship activities was even more difficult due to the nature of their daily responsibilities.

In light of the notable lack of depth in literature on this topic, this study sought to learn more about how management responsibilities impact librarians as they work towards earning tenure. It also investigated how those same tenure-track responsibilities and expectations, in turn, impact librarians’ managerial work. The researchers wanted to understand whether those librarians who have experienced being a manager while on the tenure track thought it was a hindrance or a benefit. The findings of this study will add to the existing body of literature while shedding light on the struggles and potential solutions that may assist tenure-track managing librarians as they work to balance job expectations that may, at times, compete with each other.

Purpose and Methodology

This exploratory study used a primarily quantitative survey created in Qualtrics and sought to gain an understanding of the experiences of librarians who have a managerial role and are currently on the tenure track or those who have been on the tenure track while having management responsibilities (see Appendix).

The study addressed the following questions:

Q1: How do management responsibilities impact librarians working towards earning tenure and promotion?

Q2: How do tenure and promotion work and requirements impact librarians with managerial responsibilities?

Q3: Are there certain characteristics of being a tenure-track librarian with management duties that correlate to making the promotion and tenure process more difficult?

The researchers defined management as the supervision, oversight, and evaluation of others. The first section of the survey asked questions about the tenure process in general at the institution, additional support available, and how management responsibilities were reflected in that process. The second section inquired about the librarian's specific job and management responsibilities while on the tenure track. The third section asked questions about how management responsibilities did or did not impact their tenure success, either positively or negatively. The fourth and final section inquired about how tenure work and expectations did or did not impact their managerial success, either positively or negatively.

The questions were reviewed by a librarian with experience in survey creation and analysis and were changed for clarity based on feedback. The study was approved as exempt by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nevada, Reno. Due to the lack of authoritative resources on which institutions grant librarians tenure, the study was sent to several professional email listservs covering a variety of specialties, including management, within academic libraries. These included lita-l@lists.ala.org, autocat@listserv.syr.edu, pc-clist@listserv.loc.gov, sts-l@lists.ala.org, ALA-CoreNewDirectors@ConnectedCommunity.org, ALA-CoreMiddleManagers@ConnectedCommunity.org, and ALA-CoreProjectManagement@ConnectedCommunity.org. The survey ran for 38 days, opening on May 26, 2021, and closing on July 2, 2021. The survey was started by 99 participants. Twelve participants said they had never had management responsibilities while on the tenure track or did not provide any additional information beyond initial consent and screening questions. These were removed from the study and left 87 responses for analysis.

Qualitative data obtained from open-ended questions was analyzed thematically following the process described in "Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation."²⁰ Both authors separately coded text-based answers into categories derived from the data. Resulting categories were discussed and then clustered together by both authors around similar concepts later used to illuminate particular themes. Simple frequency analysis was completed in Qualtrics for descriptive statistics and Pearson's chi-square test for independence was used to identify possible relationships between survey variables in IBM SPSS Statistics v28. The Pearson chi-square test compares observed frequencies with the frequencies expected if there was no relationship other than that occurring by chance.²¹ While exploratory in nature, researchers were particularly interested in examining the extent to which mentoring, institution demographics and practices, presence of management in promotion and tenure documentation, and the role and responsibilities of the librarian related to how respondents felt about

the advantages (or disadvantages) of being a tenure-track manager and what specific areas of management and tenure work were viewed as most challenging.

Results

Demographics

Respondents were asked what type of institution they worked at while on the tenure track (Q4). Of the 87 participants who completed the survey, an overwhelming majority (80%) were working at doctorate-granting institutions while on the tenure track (see table 1).

TABLE 1 Respondents by Institution Type		
Institution Type	N=87	%
2-Year (Associates) College	1	1%
4-Year (Baccalaureate) College	6	7%
Master’s College or University	10	12%
Doctorate-granting University	70	80%

When asked about the FTE of the institution where they are or were tenure-track (Q5), over half of respondents (54%) were at institutions with 20,001 or greater FTE (see table 2).

TABLE 2 Respondents by Institution Size		
Institution Size	N=85	%
0–5,000 FTE	3	4%
5,001–10,000 FTE	13	15%
10,001–20,000 FTE	23	27%
20,001+ FTE	46	54%

Similarly, when asked about the Carnegie Classification of the institution where they are or were tenure-track (Q6), about half of respondents (52%) were at R1, very high research activity institutions (see table 3). A surprising 11% of respondents were unsure of the Carnegie Classification of the institution where they are or were tenure-track.

TABLE 3 Respondents by Institution Classification		
Institution Class	N=87	%
R1 – Very High Research Activity	45	52%
R2 – High Research Activity	12	14%
Neither	20	23%
Unsure	10	11%

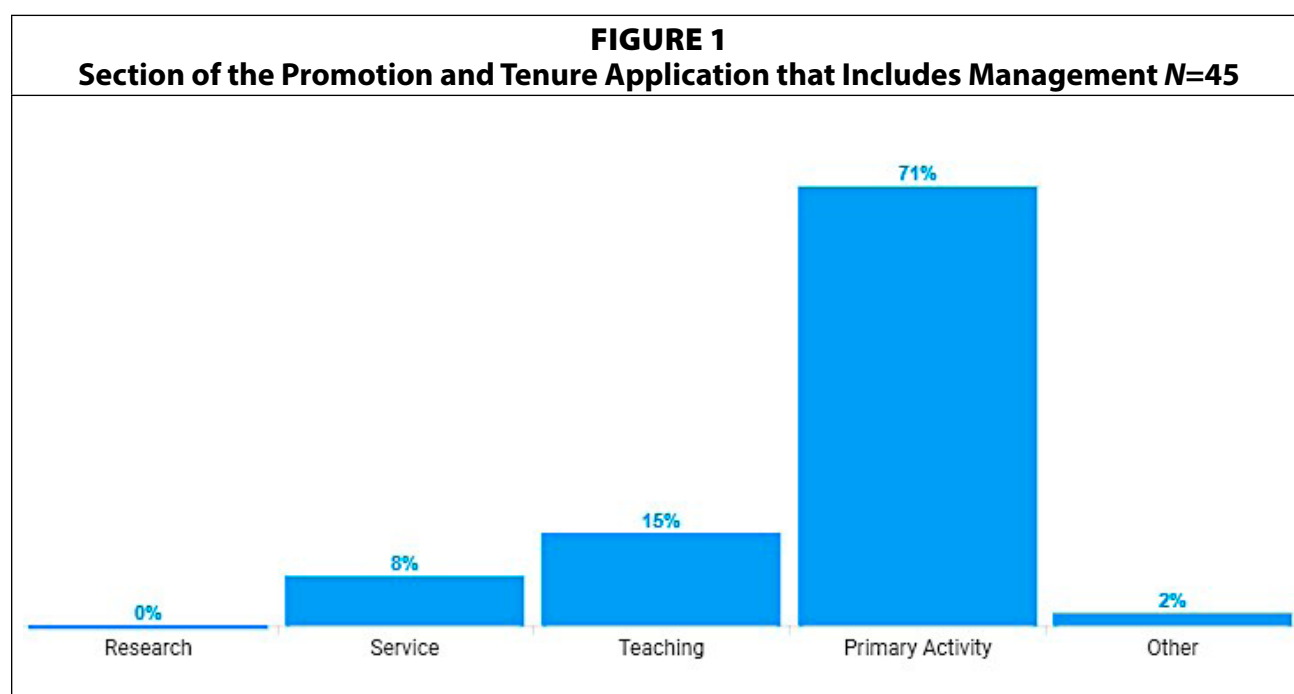
The researchers were also interested in learning how many librarians at an institution were managers on the tenure track. When asked about how many managers, including themselves, were also on the tenure track at their institution (Q7), only two responses indicated they were the only managers on tenure track (see table 4).

TABLE 4 How Many Librarians at the Institution were Tenure-Track and Managers		
Managers on Tenure Track	N=86	%
1	2	2%
2–3	33	38%
4–5	21	25%
6+	30	35%

When asked what their job title was when managing on the tenure track (Q16), 53% of responses were coded as management of some type (branch managers, directors, heads of departments, etc.). When asked what area their primary management responsibilities resided in (Q17), 28 people had supervisory responsibilities in multiple major units. The most frequently mentioned in the coded free text were Acquisitions (9) and Electronic Resources (8). Metadata and Cataloging, Reference and Instruction, and Library Administration were all mentioned in 7 responses.

Tenure Process

When asked if management responsibilities were included in their institution's promotion and tenure application (Q8), 52% of respondents answered yes while 48% answered no. Of those that answered yes, they also indicated what section of the promotion and tenure application included management responsibilities (Q9). Primary activity was overwhelmingly the top



choice; twelve respondents chose other. After coding the other responses, the researchers saw that other was chosen to account for differences in vocabulary used in institutions’ promotion and tenure documentation, not to account for different categories. The researchers chose to move those responses for ease of analysis. Eight were moved into primary activity, one into teaching, and one into service (see figure 1). Only one respondent answered that management had its own category on the promotion and tenure application.

Sixty percent of respondents indicated that they had a mentor while on the tenure track (Q12). Of that 60%, two-thirds had a mentor who was also a manager (Q13).

When asked about the availability of release time (on-the-clock time in which you are released from your regular duties) for tenure-track librarians (Q10), 87 responses were obtained. Forty-two people answered that release time was available to them while 22 answered that it was not. Of the 23 other responses, all were coded as belonging in the yes category and moved. This amounted to 75% of respondents indicating that release time was available to them. While coded as yes, the free text responses revealed release time policies that were often subjectively or unequally applied and not unilaterally practiced. Variations included release time that must be applied for, release time that only early career tenure-track managers received, and release time that was only available in the first two years. When asked whether they personally took release time (Q11), 63% of respondents said they did take release time while 37% did not. Tenure-track managers were also asked if managers were given additional support or considerations beyond non-managing librarians at their institution (Q14), only two respondents indicated that they did. When asked to explain, monetary supports were the only additional considerations mentioned.

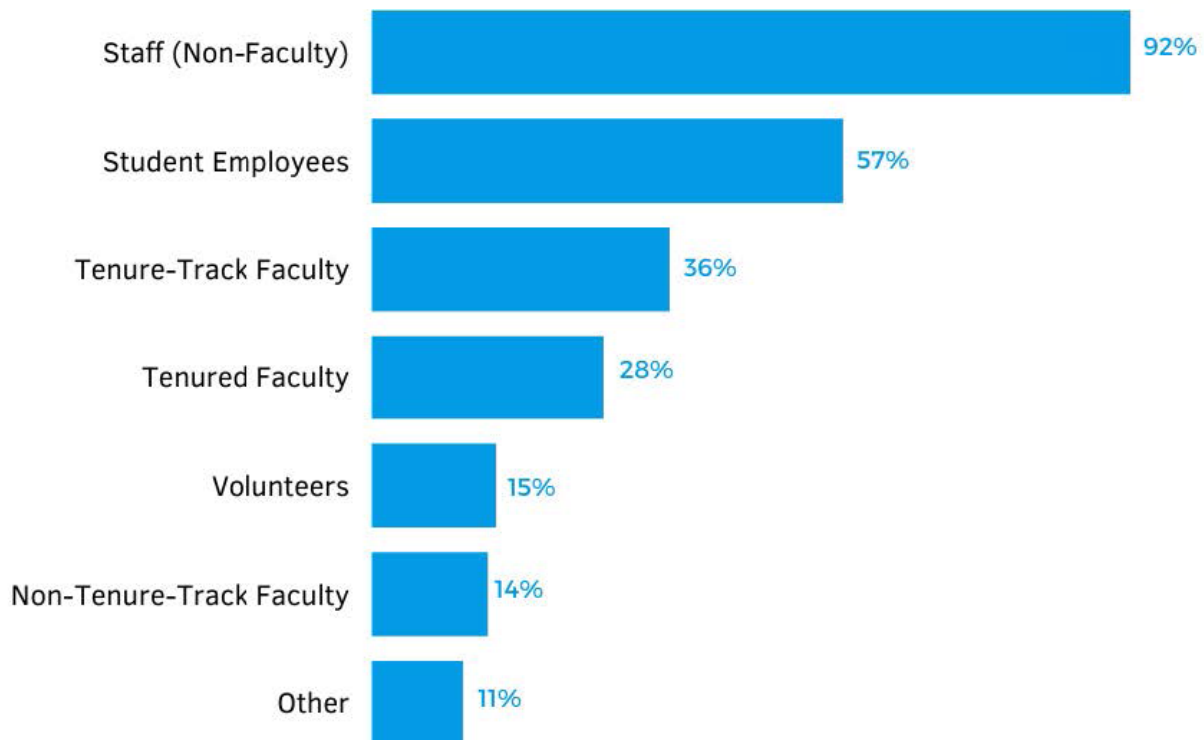
Managerial Responsibilities

Scope of managerial responsibility can help explain why the experience of managing while on the tenure track may have been advantageous to some and not to others. In order to capture some measure of managerial responsibility, managers were asked how many (Q18, see table 5) and what type of people they supervised while on the tenure track (Q19).

TABLE 5 How Many People Do Tenure-Track Managers Supervise		
Number of Reports	N=86	%
1–2	12	14%
3–4	20	23%
5–6	21	24%
7–9	16	19%
10+	17	20%

While the number of reports varied greatly across responses with around 20% per category, the type of reports were mostly staff (non-faculty) (92%) with student employees (57%) being the next highest type (see figure 2). Similarly, the coded free text responses mirrored the diversity of the selected responses with clarifications being made between direct and indirect reports and graduate versus undergraduate students. Respondents were able to select more than one option to capture the different types of people one manager may supervise. Only two responses exclusively supervised student employees.

FIGURE 2
Types of People Supervised (N=87)



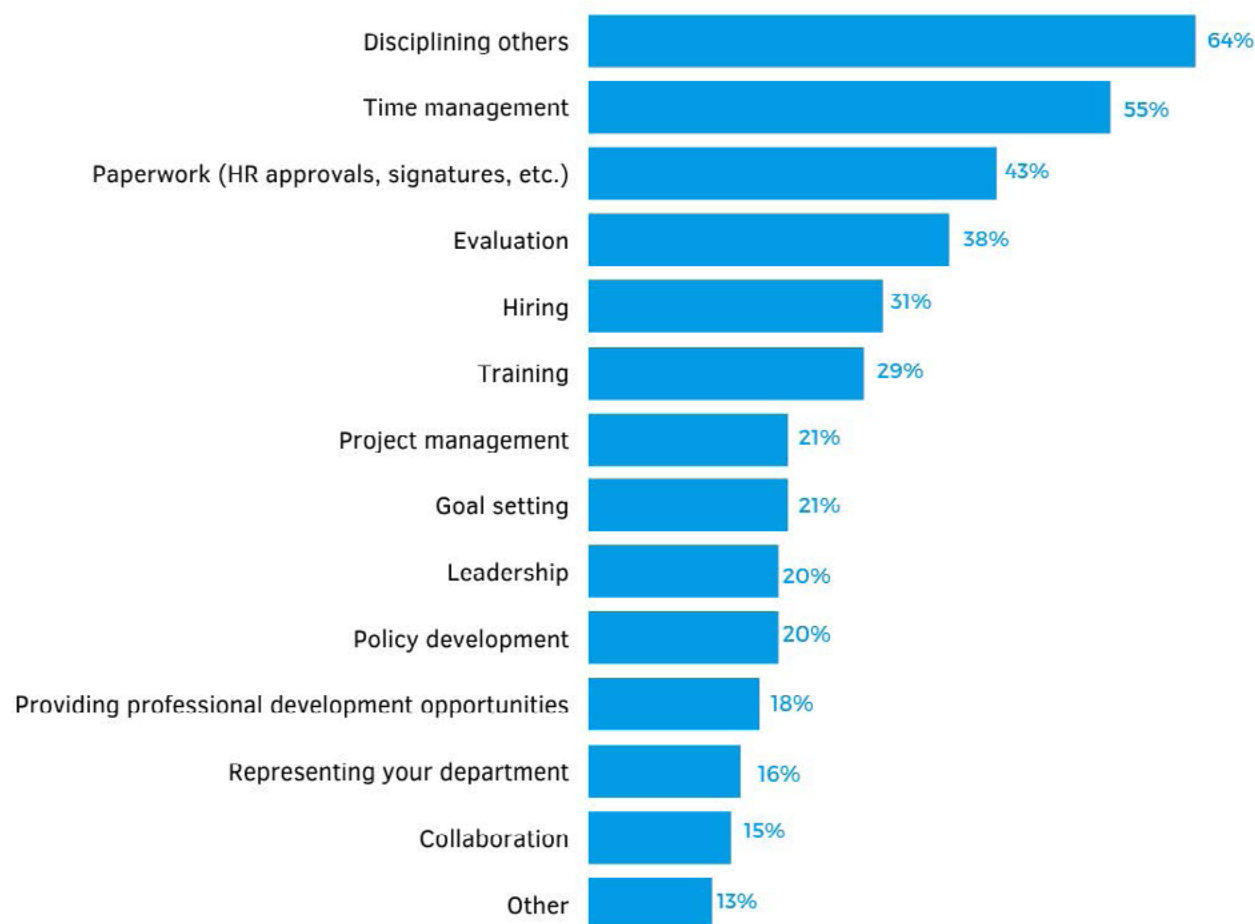
Tenure Process Impact on Managerial Responsibilities

Respondents were given a list of 15 different managerial responsibilities and asked to indicate which were the most challenging for them (Q23). Disciplining others was the top choice followed by time management, paperwork, evaluation, hiring, and training. Thirteen percent of people selected other (see figure 3). Free text responses in the other category varied greatly and showed no clear trends after coding.

When given the same list of 15 different aspects of management and asked which were made more challenging due to their tenure-track responsibilities (Q24), the 68 respondents indicated that time management, disciplining others, evaluations, and HR paperwork were made more challenging. Of the responses that indicated time management was the most challenging aspect of management on the tenure track (59%), 13 free text entries were coded as not having enough time for research or service specifically. Other answers spoke to the competing nature of time for either management or tenure-track work. The pressure on managers on the tenure track to perform well as both managers *and* tenure candidates was prevalent. One respondent stated, "I would rather be a good manager who puts her employees first. But this makes it almost impossible to schedule time for research activities." Respondents also pointed out the inability to plan management in any structured way saying, "When [management] things come up they often must be addressed quickly, so everything else gets pushed" and, "Management requires daily collaboration, conversations."

Disciplining others received 37% of responses but after coding the 21 free text responses, did not specifically address how being on the tenure track made disciplining others more difficult but rather how disciplining others is a difficult responsibility for managers in general. Evaluation received 24% of responses but each response equated to a lack of time or clarity

FIGURE 3
Aspects of Management that are Most Challenging (N=80)



in the evaluation process. Finally, paperwork also received 24% of responses but after coding the 10 free text responses, most were not specific to how being on the tenure track made it harder for them to complete paperwork. However, four responses mentioned how paperwork competed for valuable time while on the tenure track.

Finally, respondents were asked if they found their tenure work and requirements advantageous to being a successful manager (Q25). Forty-two percent of people said it was advantageous, and of those, 27 left free text responses. The most coded response was being better at managing others that are also on the tenure track (8). Research was the next most coded element with four respondents discussing how their promotion and tenure expectations required them to stay engaged and up-to-date on trends in their respective areas. An additional five respondents spoke to how their research directly informed their management practice.

Fifty-eight percent of people said that they did not find their tenure work and requirements advantageous to being a successful manager. Of those respondents, 33 left free text responses. In general, respondents saw no benefit to being a manager and being on the tenure track (9). Seven respondents said that it was not advantageous to be on the tenure track because their management work did not earn them any credit toward promotion and tenure. Three responses were coded around the competition between managers and non-managers

on the tenure track. Specifically, “the pressure to manage staff and be expected to publish at the same level as colleagues who didn’t manage staff was problematic.”

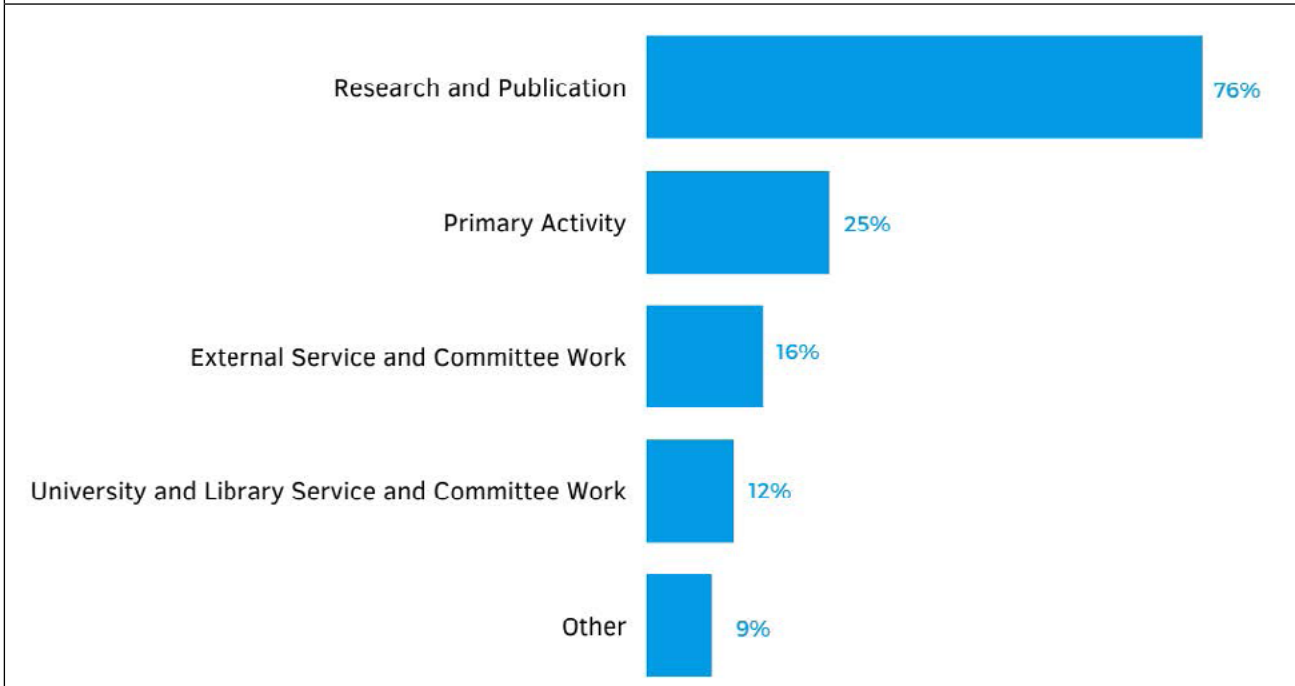
Managerial Responsibilities Impact on the Tenure Process

The researchers were also interested in knowing if the tenure process had an impact on managerial responsibilities. Respondents were given a list of four aspects of the typical tenure process (research and publication, university and library service and committee work, external service and committee work, and primary activity) and asked which aspect they felt was the most challenging (Q20). Over 60% of respondents felt that research and publication was the most challenging aspect of earning tenure.

Respondents were then asked which of the four aspects of earning tenure were made more difficult due to managerial responsibilities (Q21). Around 76% of respondents felt research and publication was made more difficult (see figure 4). Out of the 48 coded responses for research and publication, 41 were coded as lack of time to accomplish both tenure requirements and managerial responsibilities. Primary activity was second with 18 comments. Of those 18 comments, 12 responses dealt with a lack of time but with a particular focus on the dual nature of managing while also being responsible for individual primary assignment work. The researchers felt these comments spoke to how management work is viewed as separate from primary assignment work, which is often more individually focused.

University and library service and committee work, along with external service and committee work, received the remaining responses (28%). The coded text for both areas reiterated a lack of time as the reason for difficulty. Text responses for those selecting other stated that all aspects of earning promotion and tenure were made more challenging due to managerial responsibilities.

FIGURE 4
Aspects of Earning Tenure Made More Difficult Due to Managing (N=76)



When asked if respondents felt their management responsibilities were advantageous in being successful on the tenure track (Q22), 37% felt it was, with 28 providing free text responses. Overwhelmingly, respondents indicated that being a manager or having managerial tasks gave them opportunities to help lead initiatives, be a stakeholder in decision making, exposed them to projects, and made it easier for them to demonstrate their impact on library operations and the profession. The researchers interpreted these statements to infer respondents felt their impact as a manager was helpful in demonstrating mastery in primary activity on their promotion and tenure documentation. Surprisingly, two respondents indicated that they found management beneficial because they could delegate tasks to others. Two other responses were coded that, as managers, respondents were given additional insight into the promotion and tenure process by helping/managing other employees who were also going through that same process.

Sixty-three percent felt that their management responsibilities were not advantageous in being successful on the tenure track and 38 provided free text responses. Fifteen responses were coded that management was not included in promotion and tenure or they felt management did not receive the due credit on promotion and tenure documents. Twelve respondents mentioned the amount of time management takes and how it can take away from other aspects of tenure work, with six specifically citing its impact on the ability to do research. Interestingly, three people cited that being a manager and making managerial decisions could make the respondent unpopular with voting members of their promotion and tenure body. All three responses included language that they were purposefully being careful with their decision-making as managers because of this.

Additional Comments

When asked for any additional comments (Q26), 36 responses were obtained. Many echoed prior responses of lack of time, a lack of credit given to management tasks, and the sometimes-political nature of managing others who already have tenure. A new theme that emerged was that the skill set needed to be a good manager is not necessarily the same as the one needed to be a successful tenure-track faculty member. While the overwhelming amount of work without adequate time has been referenced throughout the study, one additional comment highlighted how this can disrupt work/life balance—a topic that many universities are currently grappling with.

Analysis

The researchers ran Pearson chi-squared analyses to determine if relationships existed between categorical variables within the study related to mentoring, presence of management in promotion and tenure documentation, the role and responsibilities of the individual librarian, feelings about the advantages (or disadvantages) of being a tenure-track manager, and what specific areas of management and tenure work were selected as most challenging. A p-value of less than .05 was chosen as a threshold for significance tests. Effect size is provided via Cramer's *V*, which is utilized in chi-square analyses of contingency tables larger than two columns by two rows. Cramer's *V* helps demonstrate the strength of an association between variables. While researchers may use different threshold values depending on the discipline, due to the exploratory nature of this study, the researchers chose to use a commonly accepted set of thresholds for general interpretation: less than .20 = negligible association, .20–.29 =

weak association. .30–.49 = moderate association, .50–.69 = strong association, and .70–1 = very strong association.²²

Institutional demographics (institution type, FTE, and research classification) are not included in the following results as the data was potentially skewed towards those working at large, doctoral-granting institutions with a high research classification. Without an authoritative understanding of what the actual population of tenure-track librarians is, researchers could not know whether this sample might be representative or skewed. The sample was also too small and potentially skewed to analyze data by the type of employee managed by the tenure-track librarian. Most respondents supervised at least some staff, which skewed the data too heavily for meaningful analysis. In both cases, the chi-square analysis did not meet the minimum response count (20% or more) and when Fisher's Exact test was run instead (appropriate for smaller samples), no significance was found.

While the remaining data still comes from a potentially skewed overall sample, the researchers found value in the analysis for information about this particular sample and for future investigation, despite recognizing the potential issues with external validity.

Mentoring

There was a positive, non-significant association with having a mentor and finding tenure and promotion requirements to be advantageous to being a successful manager, $\chi^2(1, N = 74) = 3.624, p = 0.057$. If respondents had a mentor but that mentor was not also a manager themselves, there was a non-significant association with disciplining others, $\chi^2(1, N = 52) = 3.525, p = 0.06$, and a significant, weak association with paperwork, $\chi^2(1, N = 52) = 4.293, p = 0.038$, Cramer's $V = 0.26$, as being aspects of management they find most challenging. This may infer that while having a mentor in general can help tenure-track librarians see value in their work as managers towards earning tenure, there are still areas of responsibility that non-managing mentors do not influence as positively as one might hope.

Promotion and Tenure Documentation

There was a positive, significant association of moderate effect size between management responsibilities not being included in promotion and tenure documentation and respondents selecting that management responsibilities were not advantageous to being successful on the tenure track, $\chi^2(1, N = 82) = 7.365, p = 0.007$, Cramer's $V = 0.30$. Perhaps without the opportunity to include their management responsibilities and subsequent impact in formal applications and documentation, managing librarians often see little to no value in managing with regards to earning promotion and tenure.

Management Roles and Responsibilities

When analyzing management roles and responsibilities, there was a significant, moderate association between the number of people supervised and selecting evaluation, $\chi^2(4, N = 86) = 14.442, p = 0.006$, Cramer's $V = 0.041$, as an aspect of management they found most challenging. 48% of those supervising 5–6 employees and 59% supervising 10+ employees selected evaluation. This may be unsurprising as annual or more frequent evaluations can take a considerable amount of time per employee. Yet, it is included here as another responsibility that takes a significant amount of time and should be taken into consideration when looking at a manager's workload.

Advantages & Disadvantages of Managing on the Tenure Track

There were two questions on the survey that directly addressed whether participants thought tenure work and requirements were advantageous to being a successful manager and vice versa. There was a positive, significant, and strong association between the two questions, $\chi^2(1, N = 73) = 24.0, p < 0.01$, Cramer's $V = 0.574$, indicating those who believed managing was advantageous to promotion and tenure success, were also likely to feel that promotion and tenure was advantageous to being a successful manager. The alternative was also true. Those who did not see a benefit in one direction, did not see it in the other. Survey answers discussed previously help illuminate why participants felt this way overall but, this strong association demonstrates the importance of ensuring managers on the tenure track feel positive about both the management and tenure-seeking aspects of their jobs since one can significantly influence the other.

Research and publication was selected as one of the most challenging aspects of earning tenure among those who did not think management was advantageous to earning tenure, and the chi-square test showed significance and a moderate effect size: $\chi^2(1, N = 82) = 10.686, p = 0.001$, Cramer's $V = 0.361$. Similar findings were shown for those who did not believe tenure work and requirements were advantageous to being a successful manager, although the effect size was weak: $\chi^2(1, N = 74) = 4.744, p = 0.029$, Cramer's $V = 0.253$. This demonstrates there is a significant association between feeling that one's management and tenure work are not beneficial to each other and struggling with the research and publication requirements of being on the tenure track.

If participants did not feel management was advantageous to being successful on the tenure track, they found collaboration, $\chi^2(1, N = 82) = 4.139, p = 0.042$, Cramer's $V = 0.225$, project management, $\chi^2(1, N = 82) = 5.695, p = 0.017$, Cramer's $V = 0.264$, and leadership, $\chi^2(1, N = 82) = 6.308, p = 0.012$, Cramer's $V = 0.277$, to be some of the most challenging aspects of management—although all these effect sizes indicate weak relationships. Conversely, if participants did not find their tenure work and requirements to be advantageous to being a successful manager, there was a positive association with selecting project management, $\chi^2(1, N = 74) = 7.245, p = 0.007$, Cramer's $V = 0.313$, and collaboration, $\chi^2(1, N = 74) = 4.831, p = 0.028$, Cramer's $V = 0.256$, as aspects of management they find most challenging. Both project management and collaboration were chosen at statistically significant rates by those who did not feel that management and tenure work were beneficial to each other, although the effect size was stronger for project management (moderate) than it was for collaboration (weak). These may be areas in which libraries choose to provide additional support and guidance for managing librarians on the tenure track.

Discussion

Too Much Work, Never Enough Time

This exploratory study exposed several themes highlighting the difficulty library managers experience while on the tenure track. A key finding was the lack of time to complete both managerial and tenure-required work and responsibilities. While only two questions included time management specifically as answers (Q23 and Q24), the lack of time to complete all necessary tasks came up repeatedly throughout the free text answers. From the free text answers, it is also clear that managing tenure-track librarians are often asked to perform substantial non-managing primary roles, in addition to supervisory and tenure-required responsibilities.

This seemed to create a sense of being overloaded among respondents. One librarian wrote, "It is incredibly difficult to take time [for research and publication] with the number of meetings I have to attend, including one-on-one meetings with my team, as well as my instruction responsibilities for the 8 departments I serve." Another pointed out that librarians are often, "working managers, meaning that we often do the work of one position plus managing. This makes or breaks your time management skills, which then make or break your ability to meet the tenure requirements." It seems that hiring authorities may be underestimating the amount of additional work managing requires and are creating positions that lead to stress, discontent, and a likelihood of increased future burnout.

Research and Release Time

It should be noted that a lack of time came up most often when discussing the requirements for research and publication. Research and publication was the overwhelming choice for the most difficult aspect of tenure and promotion and profusely for those who also felt that management was not advantageous towards earning tenure or vice versa. Research and publication is often cited as the most difficult aspect for librarians in general²³ and release time is offered as a helpful aid for creating dedicated time to conduct research. However, only 63% of those who had release time available to them utilized it. Some felt they could not "take that research release time and still be a good manager." Some respondents expressed an expectation by others that since they were managers, they should be in the office 40 hours a week to manage their staff. They felt they could not take release time, regardless of its availability. Heavy managerial loads, subjectivity of release time policies, and other potential barriers to using available release time mirror earlier findings from Vilz and Poremski.²⁴ From this study, we would recommend those wanting to implement release time for research and publication also be transparent in its policies and application. Libraries should work with managers to ensure they feel they can afford to take release time while still completing other responsibilities.

Lack of Credit and Understanding

Another finding that appeared upon closer analysis was the feeling among tenure-track managers that other librarians and faculty did not understand or appreciate the full scope of their work. One simply stated, "Other tenure-track librarians did not understand the time suck of management." While another elaborated on the differences between the two types of librarians, "...the time that others spent on research and publication efforts, I was spending on management work, project planning, and frankly, just putting together schedules and helping people succeed at their jobs!" This disconnect and frustration was also visible when discussing whether management responsibility counted towards tenure. 48% of librarians stated management roles were not included in tenure and promotion documentation and 63% stated that management responsibilities were not advantageous to earning tenure and promotion. This is in line with many respondents feeling that little credit is given for managing as it applies towards earning tenure and promotion. Responses included that:

- "Management wasn't really credited to my workload and I needed to 'do' as well as manage and lead."
- "It takes a great deal of time and effort to manage people, and not enough credit given for that work."

- "Most of my work is administrative in nature, but administrative work doesn't really count towards tenure."
- "In all our [promotion & tenure] documentation, there is no mention of management and how that's factored into the review."

Library managers on the tenure track may feel overwhelmed and under-supported when a core aspect of their daily work goes unrecognized in their career's most important documentation. One participant wrote they believed "tenure-track managers should have their own tenure expectations set that acknowledges they are different from tenure-track non-managers." The researchers acknowledge that most tenure-track librarians are required to use the same templates and documentation as more traditional teaching and research faculty from across campus. A simple way to begin recognizing the diverse roles and responsibilities among different tenure-track librarians would be to ensure in-house policies and bylaws clearly outline where in campus documentation librarians can include their unique work, such as management achievements.

The Positives

While many of the findings supported what librarians likely already suspected — that managing while on the tenure track is difficult and time-consuming — there were several positives to highlight. Some librarians felt the act of managing itself provided avenues for research topics, such as why certain strategic decisions were made in a particular field. Helping more managers on the tenure track become aware of and take advantage of this connection may alleviate some of the anxiety around publication and research requirements for earning tenure and promotion. Managing while on the tenure track also provided librarians the opportunity to grow their skills and lead new initiatives and projects, providing good examples of primary work to include on tenure and promotion documentation. As one respondent said, "Management provided me with a new frame for decision-making and strategy development. With management responsibilities also came the authority to implement new innovations, making it easier for me to document my impact on the library's operations and the profession more broadly." Another highlighted the opportunities to build relationships, stating, "You are given a lot more freedom to try new things, be involved in a larger way, help direct the library strategically, and honestly build relationships with almost everyone who will be voting on your tenure including the Dean." While mentoring only showed a marginally significant positive association with believing one's tenure and promotion responsibilities were advantageous to being a success manager, this finding is still promising and should encourage libraries to continue to develop and refine mentoring programs tailored to individual librarian needs, including those in management roles.

Limitations

Potential limitations of the study include the sampling method and unknowns surrounding the population of tenure-track librarians who are also managers. Use of a listserv as a sampling method resulted in participants who self-selected to participate. The use of listservs is potentially problematic since there is no way to know how many people subscribe to each listserv and therefore how widely the survey was distributed or what a reasonable response rate would have been. It is assumed these participants did not provide a representative study of the larger population of tenure-track managing librarians. The participant pool skewed towards those

who are or were on the tenure track and working as managers at larger, doctorate-granting institutions. The timing of the study was also potentially problematic, occurring in the midst of a pandemic—a stressful time for many working in libraries, especially managers. Future research on this and related topics should utilize different, more purposeful sampling methods to garner a more representative participant group. Future research should also consider using existing instruments to permit exploration of some of the related concerns brought up in this study. For example, this study's findings indicate that burnout and occupational stress could be a more frequent experience among tenure-track librarians with management responsibilities than among non-managing peers.

Future Directions

Mentorship

Though the importance of mentorship has been well-researched and documented,²⁵ only a marginally significant association was found between how tenure-track librarians viewed their tenure and promotion work's impact on management and whether they had a mentor. Having a mentor who was also a manager seemed to have little impact as well, showing only a marginal significance on what librarians felt were the most challenging aspects of management. Because of mentoring's positive impact in other areas of librarianship, a future area of research could focus specifically on the relationship between mentoring and managers on the tenure track and whether there are possibilities to improve it.

Potential for Politics

Something the survey did not directly address was the potentially precarious political position that managers on the tenure track may face. Twenty-four respondents said they managed tenured employees while they themselves were still on the tenure track. In these cases, knowing that someone you supervise will be voting on your tenure and promotion may impact what decisions one makes. As one participant wrote, "...I think it is actually quite tricky since being in management can get political. If my tenured colleagues (including my own bosses) do not agree with a management type decision I make, I have absolutely worried it could impact a future vote on my tenure." As libraries tend to be very hierarchical organizations, this warrants further investigation to determine how great the impact of such political concerns might be on tenure-track managing librarians in terms of successfully earning tenure and in being able to lead their unit effectively.

Time Demands

The overwhelming theme of competing time demands for managing librarians speaks to a need for further study. Future research efforts could look more closely at all the specific tasks and responsibilities of managing tenure-track librarians, along with their corresponding time demands. It would be important to document if what they are experiencing and feeling could lead to a higher rate of occupational stress or job burnout, or potentially have a negative impact on their direct reports or tenure success. Addressing this sense of overload may make it easier for hiring authorities to create positions with a greater chance for success and satisfaction.

Financial Benefits

An aspect of library management not addressed in this study was the financial benefits gained

when taking on managerial responsibilities. Future work could explore the attitudes and common practices surrounding librarians taking on managerial responsibilities to see if increased financial gain is a factor in role expectations, hiring, retention, promotion, and job satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study explored how management responsibilities may impact librarians working toward earning tenure and promotion and vice versa. A salient theme throughout the study was the time required to be both a tenure-track librarian and a manager. While time was a factor even for librarians that felt managing was advantageous while working toward earning promotion and tenure, the idea of splitting time between management duties and tenure-track expectations for managing librarians was especially poignant. For librarians who felt that managing was not advantageous to earning promotion and tenure, the idea of splitting time and lack of credit given for management responsibilities seemed to spoil both experiences equally. While the responses showed that experiences may vary for library managers on the tenure track, certain characteristics of being a tenure-track librarian with management duties were illuminated as making the promotion and tenure process more difficult. These included the unwillingness or inability to take release time for research and the dual jobs many tenure-track managing librarians feel they are carrying when attempting to manage others and complete individual primary work themselves.

Library leaders should be clear about expectations in terms of how much individual primary work each managing librarian is expected to complete and how those expectations relate to their promotion and pursuit of tenure. Due to the high likelihood of burnout or occupational stress managing librarians could be facing, mentoring could also be adjusted to account for the additional stressors managing tenure-track librarians' face when attempting to meet promotion and tenure requirements. Additionally, there should be more awareness in libraries regarding all the job responsibilities of managing tenure-track librarians compared to their non-managing peers. Positively, management responsibilities were viewed by some tenure-track managers as advantageous due to the ability to reframe and apply research projects, be involved in high-level decision making, and build relationships.

Appendix. Library Managers on the Tenure-Track

Welcome to our research study!

We are interested in understanding the experiences of librarians who have a managerial role and are currently on the tenure-track or those who have been on the tenure-track while performing a management role. We are defining management as the supervision, oversight, and evaluation of others. We are interested in learning more about how management responsibilities impact librarians as they work to earn tenure and vice versa, how the tenure process impacts managerial responsibilities. For this study, you will be asked to answer some questions about your experiences. Your responses will be kept completely confidential.

The study should take you around 15–20 minutes to complete. Your participation in this IRB exempt research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study. The Principal Investigators of this study can be contacted at eboss@unr.edu or tradniecki@unr.edu.

Q1. By clicking the “Yes, I consent” button below, you acknowledge:

Your participation in the study is voluntary. You are at least 18 years of age. You are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation at any time for any reason.

- ☐ Yes, I consent. Please begin the study.
- ☐ No, I do not consent. I do not wish to participate in the study.

Skip To: End of Survey If Q27 = No, I do not consent. I do not wish to participate in the study.

Q2. Are you currently on the tenure-track or have you been on the tenure-track at any point in your career as a librarian?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Skip To: End of Survey If Q2 = No

Q3. Do you currently have management responsibilities while on the tenure-track or did you have management responsibilities while on tenure-track? Management responsibilities include but are not limited to supervision, oversight, and evaluation of others.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Skip To: End of Survey If Q3 = No

The following questions are about the institution where are you or were tenure-track.

Q4. Which option below best describes the type of institution you are or were tenure-track at?

- ☐ 2-Year (Associates) College
- ☐ 4-year (Baccalaureate) College
- ☐ Master's College or University
- ☐ Doctorate-granting University
- ☐ Other _____

Q5. What is the FTE of the institution at which you are or were working towards tenure at?

- ☐ 0–5,000
- ☐ 5,001–10,000
- ☐ 10,001–20,000
- ☐ 20,001+

Q6. Is or was the institution classified as R1: Very High Research Activity or R2: High Research Activity per the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education?

- ☐ Yes: R1
- ☐ Yes: R2
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ No

Q7. Including yourself, how many librarians at the institution do you know of are or were on the tenure-track while serving in manager positions?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2–3
- ☐ 4–5
- ☐ 6+

The following questions are about the tenure process at the institution and how management is reflected in them.

Q8. Are or were management responsibilities reflected or included in your institution's promotion and tenure application? Do librarians with management responsibilities include written documentation, such as management highlights and achievements, of that work in your institution's promotion and tenure application?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Display This Question:

If Q8 = Yes

Q9. Under what section of the promotion and tenure application are management responsibilities included?

- ☐ Research
- ☐ Service
- ☐ Teaching
- ☐ Primary Activity
- ☐ Other _____

Q10. Do tenure-track librarians at your institution get release time (on-the-clock time in which you're released from your regular duties) to work on tenure-track related activities, such as research?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other, please explain _____

Display This Question:

If Q10 = Yes

Or Q10 = Other, please explain

Q11. Do or did you personally take any release time?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q12. Do or did you have a mentor while on the tenure-track?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Display This Question:

If Q12 = Yes

Q13. Is or was your mentor also a manager?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q14. Do or did managers on the tenure-track receive additional support or considerations beyond what non-managing librarians receive, such as release time or different evaluation criteria?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Display This Question:

If Q14 = Yes

Q15. If yes, please explain.

The following questions are about your specific position while on the tenure-track.

Q16. What is or was your job title while on the tenure-track?

Q17. In which area are or were your primary management responsibilities while on the tenure-track?

- ☐ Reference and Instruction
- ☐ Access Services/Circulation
- ☐ Metadata and Cataloging
- ☐ Acquisitions
- ☐ Electronic Resources
- ☐ Special Collections and Archives
- ☐ Library Administration
- ☐ Other—Please describe below _____

Q18. How many people do or did you supervise while on the tenure-track?

- ☐ 1–2
- ☐ 3–4
- ☐ 5–6
- ☐ 7–9
- ☐ 10+

Q19. What type of people do or did you supervise while on the tenure-track? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Staff (non-Faculty)
- ☐ Tenured Faculty
- ☐ Tenure-Track Faculty
- ☐ Non-Tenure-Track Faculty
- ☐ Student Employees
- ☐ Volunteers
- ☐ Other — Please describe below _____

The following questions are related to your personal experience and how management responsibilities may or may not impact your tenure success.

Q20. Which aspects of earning tenure do or did you find most challenging? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Research & Publication
- ☐ University and Library Service and Committee Work
- ☐ External Service and Committee Work
- ☐ Primary Activity
- ☐ Other

Q21. Of those listed in the previous question, which do you think were more difficult due to your management responsibilities? Please include why in the box below. (select all that apply)

- ☐ Research & Publication _____
- ☐ University and Library Service and Committee Work _____
- ☐ External Service and Committee Work _____
- ☐ Primary Activity _____
- ☐ Other _____

Q22. Do or did you find your management responsibilities to be advantageous in being successful on the tenure-track? Please include why in the box below.

- ☐ Yes _____
- ☐ No _____

The following questions are related to your personal experience and how tenure work and expectations may or may not impact your managerial success.

Q23. Which aspects of management do or did you find most challenging? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Time management
- ☐ Training
- ☐ Hiring

- ☐ Collaboration
- ☐ Project management
- ☐ Representing your department
- ☐ Leadership
- ☐ Goal setting
- ☐ Policy development
- ☐ Disciplining others
- ☐ Paperwork (HR approvals, signatures, etc.)
- ☐ Evaluation
- ☐ Providing professional development opportunities
- ☐ Other _____

Q24. Of those listed in the previous question, which do you think were made more difficult due to work and requirements necessary to obtain tenure? Please include why in the box below. (select all that apply)

- ☐ Time management
- ☐ Training
- ☐ Hiring
- ☐ Collaboration
- ☐ Project management
- ☐ Representing your department
- ☐ Leadership
- ☐ Goal setting
- ☐ Policy development
- ☐ Disciplining others
- ☐ Paperwork (HR approvals, signatures, etc.)
- ☐ Evaluation
- ☐ Providing professional development opportunities
- ☐ Other _____

Q25. Do or did you find your tenure work and requirements to be advantageous to being a successful manager? Please include why in the box below.

- ☐ Yes _____
- ☐ No _____

Q26. Is there any additional information on this topic that you would like to share with the researchers?

Q27. If you would like to receive a notification when this research is published and available, please include your email below.

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