

**SEARCH & SELECTION PROCESS FOR LIBRARY FACULTY AND  
NON-CLASSIFIED POSITIONS**

**University of Arkansas Libraries  
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April 20, 2004**

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Writing Job Descriptions/Postings for Library Faculty and Non-classified Positions: Procedures and Responsibilities

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# SEARCH & SELECTION PROCESS FOR LIBRARY FACULTY AND NON-CLASSIFIED POSITIONS

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## 1. Introduction

Recruitment of library faculty at the University of Arkansas is a cooperative activity involving university administrative staff as well as library faculty and staff. Search committees are used to solicit and screen applications, recommend candidates to be interviewed, and facilitate the interview process. The library decision-making authority resides with the Dean of Libraries.

The goal of the search process is to select the best possible applicant for the position, in conformity with legal, professional, and institutional policies, in an open and equitable process, with as much dispatch and efficiency as circumstances permit.

Individuals involved in the process should be familiar with the University's Affirmative Action Plan and be cognizant of their responsibilities in implementing it. (For the most recent version of the "Recruitment Manual," see [http://www.uark.edu/depts/ofaa/Recruitment\\_Manual.html](http://www.uark.edu/depts/ofaa/Recruitment_Manual.html) or Appendix 1.) They should also be familiar with the Dual Career Employment Network offered to the spouses and partners of newly hired university employees (see <http://hr.uark.edu/programs/DualCareerEmploymentNetwork.asp> or Appendix 2).

All correspondence and administrative operations of the search are conducted through the Library Human Resources Office (LHRO).

In general, the process described below applies to non-classified staff positions as well as to library faculty, except for obvious references to rank/tenure and to the scope and extent of the interview, the composition of the search committee, etc. The personnel officer will clarify differences to the individuals involved with a search to fill a non-classified staff position.

## 2. Personnel Involved in the Process

### 2.1 The Dean

The dean appoints the search committee members and chair; reviews position postings; reviews recommendations of the search committee, division director, and relevant faculty personnel committees; makes the decision and seeks approval from the provost to offer the position; and makes the offer to the candidate and negotiates salary.

### 2.2 The Search Committee

**2.2.1 Appointment.** The dean appoints the members of the search committee and designates a chairperson.

**2.2.2 Composition.** The size and composition of the committee depend upon the vacancy to be filled. In general, there are four to seven members. The committee consists of members from the department in which the vacancy occurs and other library employees who interact with the person in the position. Permanent appointed employees (library faculty, other non-classified library employees, and classified staff) may serve. In some cases, committee members may be recruited from outside the library.

**2.2.3 Chairperson.** The chairperson of the committee, the personnel officer, and the personnel assistant work closely together to determine what assistance is required and when it is needed for the committee. The chairperson is the liaison between the committee and the department head, division director, or dean.

## **2.3 Division Director**

The appropriate division director and/or department head attend the first meeting of the search committee to clarify the position description and to answer any questions regarding the assignment of the committee. Following the review of the search committee's reports, the division director makes a separate recommendation regarding candidates to interview and also the candidate to hire.

## **2.4 Personnel Officer**

The personnel officer (director for organizational development) serves as procedural and administrative consultant for the LHRO, the search committee, the division director, and the dean throughout the search process, ensuring that application files are in order, that necessary correspondence is carried out and updated, and that affirmative action procedures are correctly followed.

The personnel officer attends the first meeting of the search committee to address procedural questions and attends other meetings as required and/or invited.

## **2.5 Personnel Assistant**

The personnel assistant (library human resources manager) prepares for review and approval advertisements, forms, and all correspondence associated with the search. She/He arranges final details of campus visits of candidates, based on the search committee's initial conversations with candidates regarding desired dates of arrival and departure, transportation, etc.

The personnel assistant initially handles any questions regarding the billing for travel and other expenses incurred by candidates and others during the course of the search (see Appendix 3).

## **2.6 Dean's Secretary**

The dean's secretary arranges for refreshments during the open break with the candidate.

# **3. The Search Process**

## **3.1 Advertisement and Approvals to Advertise**

**3.1.1 Position Description.** The division director writes the position description for the vacancy in consultation with the relevant department head and dean.

**3.1.2 Suggestions for Posting.** The division director, search committee, and others complete the form, "Writing Position Descriptions" (see <http://libinfo.uark.edu/webdocs/humanresources/WritingJobPosting.pdf>), to recommend periodicals, online job posting services, discussion lists, etc., for posting the position, including ALA-accredited library schools for entry-level positions (see Appendix 4).

**3.1.3 Advertisement.** The personnel officer consults the Office of Affirmative Action directives for appropriate wording in advertisements. Advertisements contain position description, rank, salary, start date for review of applications, brief description of the university, library, and community, etc. (see Appendix 5 for examples). Applications are addressed to the director for organizational development.

**3.1.4 Approval from Provost to Advertise.** The personnel officer prepares for the dean to send to the provost a memorandum seeking approval to conduct a national search; the previously approved “Faculty Hiring Plan” showing the position; the position vacancy announcement; and any statements on the use of strategic investment funds, if relevant.

**3.1.5 Approval from Office of Affirmative Action (OFAA) to Advertise.** The personnel officer also signs and sends a cover memorandum, a “Recruitment Plan” form (see Appendix 1), a copy of the vacancy announcement (print and electronic versions), and a copy of the proposed advertisement (if different) to the director of affirmative action for approval of the advertisement.

**3.1.6 Posting the Position.** Following approvals from the provost and the director of affirmative action, the Affirmative Action Office posts the announcement in the appropriate university locations for a minimum of thirty days. The personnel assistant advertises the position with job posting services as recommended.

## **3.2 Handling Applications**

**3.2.1 Unsolicited Applications.** The library occasionally receives applications that are not in response to any specific advertised vacancy. The personnel officer alerts these applicants to vacancies and invites them to apply for positions (see Appendix 6).

**3.2.2 Recording Receipt of Materials.** A log sheet is kept for recording the sequential order and the date of receipt for each application.

**3.2.3 Submitted Applications.** A file of record for each applicant is kept in the LHRO. It contains original application materials, letters of reference, correspondence to and from the applicant, etc. The LHRO makes copies of applications for distribution to the committee.

**3.2.4 Acknowledging Applications.** The personnel assistant sends a letter of acknowledgment, an affirmative action form, and a stamped envelope addressed to OFAA (see Appendix 1 for sample) for the voluntary return of the affirmative action form. (The letter also states that the applicant’s name is subject to disclosure under the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act.) The personnel assistant attaches a copy of the letter of acknowledgment on the front of the candidate's application.

**3.2.5 Access to files.** Only search committee members, the dean, the relevant division director, and the relevant department head are permitted to access the complete search file. Access is documented by a sign-out sheet.

**3.2.6 Public file.** For interested library staff, a separate public access file is created that contains copies of each applicant's vita and cover letter. Browsing this file must be done in the LHRO.

**3.2.7 In-house Applicants.** Current library faculty members who are applicants receive the same consideration, correspondence, and professional courtesies as any other applicant. With in-house candidates or local residents, some flexibility in scheduling interviews can be exercised.

### 3.3 Evaluating the Applicants

**3.3.1 Screening Form.** The search committee prepares a screening form based on the job description and uses it for recording notes on each candidate (see Appendix 7 for examples).

**3.3.2 Minimum Qualifications.** The committee focuses first on whether each applicant meets minimum qualifications (see also Appendix 4 for ALA-accredited master's programs). The personnel assistant sends letters of rejection signed by the director for organizational development to those applicants who do not meet minimum qualifications (see Appendix 8 for examples). A copy of the rejection letter becomes part of each applicant's file.

**3.3.3 Conference Calls.** The committee is encouraged to use conference calls as a means of narrowing the field. A speaker phone is available for this purpose.

**3.3.4 Pursuing a Required Degree.** If the position requires an M.L.S. (or M.L.I.S. or equivalent) and the candidate does not yet have the degree, this need not be a reason to count the candidate out of the search if he/she intends to have it in hand by the time of hire. (The personnel officer and dean should be consulted.)

### 3.4 Contacting References

**3.4.1 Not Contacting References.** If the applicant has specifically requested that his or her supervisor or employer not be contacted, the committee honors the request. As the process goes along, however, if the committee feels that it is necessary to make contact in order to make an informed decision regarding the suitability of the applicant, then the committee can request permission from the applicant to contact the supervisor or employer.

**3.4.2 Requesting References.** The committee requests references only for the candidates who meet the minimum qualifications for the position and who are being considered seriously. The committee writes, calls, or emails to request letters of recommendation from the references listed on the applications (see Appendix 9 for examples).

**3.4.3 Vacancy Announcement.** The chairperson sends a copy of the vacancy announcement to all references to enable them to tailor their letter or evaluative comments to the position requirements.

**3.4.4 Content of the Recommendation.** Qualifications required for the open position should be discussed. Questions should also probe the applicant's strengths and weaknesses, including professional competence, scholarship, attitude, managerial or supervisory skills, and ability to cooperate; the nature and tenor of the relationship of the applicant to the individual being contacted; the length of their relationship; and the length of service at the institution of the person acting as reference.

**3.4.5 Written Recommendations.** Letters (and emails) of recommendation are kept in the file of record. When each letter of recommendation or email is received, the chair of the committee notifies the LHRO, and the director for organizational development sends a letter of thanks to acknowledge receipt of the recommendation (see Appendix 10 for sample letter).

**3.4.6 Verbal Recommendations.** Verbal responses from references should be written down by the interviewers for the record.

**3.4.7 Documentation.** All rating sheets, charts, forms, and other formal evaluative summary instruments which the committee members and others have used for their recommendation are given to the LHRO.

## **3.5 Pre-Interview Recommendations and Approvals**

**3.5.1 Search Committee Recommendation.** The committee completes the “Applicant Worksheet” and prepares a memorandum to the division director and to the dean explaining which applicants are recommended for an interview and why, and also why each of those who have been rejected are not being considered. All search materials, including the memorandum, are turned in to the personnel officer for completing, organizing, and forwarding the file.

**3.5.2 Division Director Recommendation.** The division director, with input from the department head, reviews the committee’s recommendation and file of applications and makes a separate recommendation to the dean.

**3.5.3 Decision/Approval of the Dean.** Once the dean makes a decision on the recommendations, required documentation—including the “Applicant Worksheet,” letter of support from the division director, letter of support from the dean, and a copy of the résumé of each applicant recommended for interview—is sent to OFAA for approval before preparations for the interview can begin (see Appendix 1).

**3.5.4 Rejection Letters.** After the recommendations for applicants to be interviewed are approved by the Affirmative Action Office, the personnel assistant sends letters of rejection, signed by the director for organizational development, to applicants who will not be considered any further.

## **4. The Interview**

### **4.1 Scheduling the Interview**

**4.1.1 Invitation to Interview.** The search committee chair contacts the candidates: 1). to explore possible on-site interview dates; 2). to discuss the topic, arrangement, and audience for a presentation, if such is required; and 3). to request a portfolio of materials (articles in major publications, newsletters, examples of other work, electronic citations, etc.) appropriate for consideration for promotion and/or tenure.

**4.1.2 Interview Visit.** In general, the interview visit lasts no longer than two days, although oftentimes it is necessary that interviewees come on a Saturday to take advantage of discount rates for airfare. See <http://libinfo.uark.edu/webdocs/humanresources/TravelArrangementsForCandidates.pdf> or Appendix 11 for details of arranging travel transportation and accommodations. See <http://libinfo.uark.edu/webdocs/dean/mealreimbursementform.doc> and <http://libinfo.uark.edu/webdocs/dean/statementoftravelform.xls>, or see Appendix 12 for expense report forms.

**4.1.3 Responsibilities for Schedule.** The search committee and chair prepare a preliminary interview schedule, confirm availability and times with all parties involved, reserve meeting rooms, and contact the dean’s secretary for arranging any open breaks. (Many of the interview plans often must be made simultaneously and may need frequent adjustments before the schedule is finalized.)

**4.1.4 Interview Schedule.** The schedule usually includes, but is not restricted to, the following:

- Two meetings with the search committee (near beginning and end of schedule)
- Opportunity for interaction with employees in the department(s) in question
- A separate meeting with the relevant division director
- Opportunity for interaction with every faculty member sometime during the interview
- Meeting with Faculty Concerns Committee
- A group meeting with the dean, the associate dean, and division directors
- A separate meeting with the dean (usually fairly late in the visit)
- A presentation with open forum
- Open break
- Meals

**4.1.5 The Final Schedule.** When all details of the visit are arranged, the search committee chair compiles the schedule for the interview (see Appendix 13 for sample schedules). The schedule includes the arrival/departure time of the candidate, the time and place of each event on the schedule, and the person responsible for each event. At least one member of the search committee accompanies the candidate from place to place, making introductions and attending to the candidate's comfort and convenience.

**4.1.6 Distributing the schedule.** The personnel assistant formats the schedule and distributes it to all concerned parties and to the library discussion list, along with the interviewee's résumé. The entire library is encouraged to attend the candidate's prepared talk, open forum, and open break.

**4.1.7 Informing the Interviewee.** The personnel assistant sends the interview schedule to the candidate along with pertinent information and brochures about the library, library faculty, university, and community (see Appendix 14).

**4.1.8 Presentation by Candidate.** The committee may ask the candidate to make a brief presentation on a subject in his or her area of expertise. The committee provides a general topic which the candidate can then focus more narrowly, notes time limits, and describes the audience.

**4.1.9 Discussing Salary Requirements.** The personnel officer discusses salary requirements with the candidate.

## **4.2 The Search Committee Interview**

**4.2.1 Core Questions and Concerns.** The committee prepares core questions that are the same for all candidates so that evaluations are conducted on equal terms. These basic questions, however, can be modified and others added to tailor the interview more appropriately to each individual. The committee should also follow useful lines of questioning that depart from the prepared list and keep the discussion moving in an orderly fashion. The prepared questions provide a framework for the interview and help the committee to assess the candidate's suitability for the position as well as the candidate's potential for tenurability and productivity. (See Appendix 15 for sample question sets and Appendices 16 and 17 for various strategies, practices, and concerns in asking interview questions.)

**4.2.2 Questions and Concerns of the Interviewee.** The interview and on-site visit should help the candidate make an informed decision about the position. Information about the university, the library, and the vacant position is provided in advance, and the discussions provide opportunities for the candidate to ask questions as well as to be questioned.



## 5. Deliberations & Recommendations

**5.1 Evaluation of the Candidate.** The personnel officer solicits and collects evaluative comments regarding the candidate(s) from library personnel who wish to respond. These reactions become a part of the search committee's discussions. (The form can be found at <http://libinfo.uark.edu/webdocs/humanresources/CandidateEvaluationForm.doc>, <http://libinfo.uark.edu/webdocs/humanresources/CandidateEvaluationForm.wpd>, and Appendix 18.)

**5.2 Search Committee Deliberations.** The search committee meets as soon as possible after all invited candidates have been interviewed so that candidates can be notified of a decision in a timely manner. The committee attempts as much as possible to reach consensus, although this is not always possible. If there is a difference of opinion within the committee, the committee makes a recommendation that includes documentation explaining why the recommendation is not unanimous. The committee may find that there is no suitable candidate for the position and may recommend to the dean *not* to hire.

**5.3 Search Committee Report and Recommendation.** OFAA guidelines state that in the report, "the interviewees must be listed in the order of preference beginning with the best and concluding with the least qualified interviewee. If any of the interviewees are found to be unqualified for the position as a result of the interview or information obtained during the review process, the concerns must be noted in the narrative summary." Candidates should not be compared to each other, but rather, should be evaluated individually on the basis of basic and desirable qualifications. All search materials, including the committee's report, are turned in to the personnel officer for completing, organizing, and forwarding the file.

**5.4 Division Director Recommendation.** The division director consults with the relevant department head and then makes a separate recommendation of his/her own. Both recommendations are forwarded to the dean, along with the complete search file.

**5.5 Rank and Tenure Status.** The search committee or the dean may choose to recommend, or the candidate may request, that appropriate library faculty personnel committees review the initial rank and tenure status of the recommended finalist candidate(s). If so, the director for organizational development convenes the first meeting of the relevant personnel committee(s). The report, including the vote, is given to the dean.

## 6. Decision of the Dean, Approvals, and Completion of the Search

**6.1 Review Recommendation.** The dean reviews the recommendations of the search committee, of the division director, and of the personnel committee(s) (if applicable), and may confer with any regarding their recommendation. If rejecting the recommended candidate, the dean explains his or her reasons for doing so to the parties involved. The dean may reject all candidates and may decide to re-advertise the position or to suspend the search.

**6.2 Rank and Tenure Status.** The dean may request that the relevant library faculty personnel committee convene to vote on a recommendation of the initial rank and tenure status most appropriate for the candidate.

**6.3 Seeking OFAA Approval.** If the dean agrees with the recommendation, LHRO prepares documentation to send to OFAA for certification of the search, including a cover memorandum, copies of the committee's and division director's recommendations, the "Recruitment Summary Form" (see Appendix 1), the (draft) official letter of offer (based on the letter contained in Academic Policy 1405.16, "Faculty Hiring Plan and Appointment Procedures," in Appendix 19), and the candidate's vita.

**6.4 Seeking Provost's Approval.** The dean requests permission from university administration to hire the candidate at the proposed rank and salary. Documentation prepared by the LHRO includes a cover memorandum, the (draft) official letter of offer, copies of the committee's and division director's recommendations, any reports of the tenure and promotion committees, "Nomination for Tenure" form (if applicable), the candidate's vita, and a copy of the approved letter granting permission to post.

**6.5 Making the Offer.** If certification and permission are granted, the dean contacts the candidate, makes an offer, negotiates the salary, and announces the response of the candidate to the chair of the search committee, to the appropriate library administrative groups, to internal candidates, and to all other library staff. The dean's initial offer is made by telephone and is followed up immediately with an official offer by mail.

**6.6 The Written Offer.** The personnel officer sends to the candidate the final approved letter of offer with the signature of the dean. The candidate signs on the appropriate line in the letter ("I accept the position as outlined above" or "I do not accept the position as outlined above") and returns the original letter with his or her signature to the LHRO.

**6.7 Offer is Declined.** If the candidate declines the offer, the dean may decide to ask the committee to put forward another recommendation from the candidate pool, to re-advertise the position, or to suspend the search.

**6.8 Internal Candidates.** After the offer is accepted by the chosen candidate, if there is an internal candidate who has been rejected, the division director and the committee chairperson meet separately with the candidate to provide feedback on the committee's decision and on ways in which the candidate can build on his/her skills.

**6.9 Final Rejection Letters.** After the final offer has been made, and after it has been accepted in writing by the successful candidate, the personnel officer sends final letters of rejection to the remaining candidates, including those who have been interviewed and who were unsuccessful (see Appendix 20 for sample letters).

**6.10 Completing Affirmative Action Process.** The personnel officer follows all affirmative action procedures for the close of a search, even if the search is unsuccessful and no candidate is offered the position or if all candidates offered the position turn it down.

**6.11 Retention or Disposal of Search Materials.** All confidential search committee and other documentation should be turned in to the LHRO for required retention and/or disposal. Since electronic mail and files are not permanent, persons involved in the search process should also give to the LHRO paper copies of confidential, evaluative electronic communications before they delete their own electronic versions of same.

**6.12 Completing the Search Record.** The personnel assistant ensures that the search committee file is complete for the record and that it is filed with other search committee files and kept for at least three years.

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