2017-09-28

Promotion and Appointment of Librarians Task Force: Final Report and Recommendations
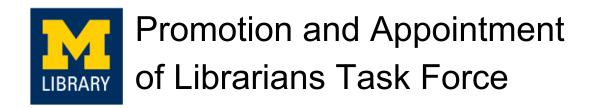
Vacek, Rachel; Leyton, Denise; Oehrli, Angie; Shannon, Carol; Stuchell, Lance; Ottaviani, Jim

https://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/139674

Promotion and Appointment of Librarians Task Force

Final Report and Recommendations

September 28, 2017

Submitted by:

Denise Leyton
Angie Oehrli
Jim Ottaviani
Carol Shannon
Lance Stuchell (co-chair)
Rachel Vacek (co-chair)

Executive summary

Librarians' Forum charged the Promotion and Appointment of Librarians Task Force (PAL) with reviewing our promotion process and making recommendations for changes to better align what we do with the goals of both individuals and the Library. To do this, we gathered information via surveys, focus groups, and meetings with librarians and administrators. We also reviewed promotion data provided by Library Human Resources and spoke with and reviewed materials from colleagues at peer institutions across the Big Ten and beyond.

In general, although there was little consensus on why an individual might want to go through the promotion process, librarians perceive it as important and as meeting many of the needs we have for professional growth. People appreciated its flexibility and ability to recognize the broad range of skills manifested in the colleagues we rely on. They further appreciated that it is a voluntary (not a tenure-track, up-or-out system) and peer-led process that offers everyone an occasion for both self-reflection and advancement in our careers.

It's not a perfect process, though, and through these conversations, we've identified the following areas—pain points, if you will—where we can improve it:

Feedback: Lack of meaningful feedback from the process is a major concern. To remedy this, we suggest that the candidate's supervisor and AUL discuss PRC's findings with the candidate. Supervisors already have access to the recommendation letters, so they will not see anything new in PRC's letter. Regarding AULs, they are currently absent from the promotion process, except when they directly supervise a candidate. By involving them, we both advance our One Library goals and add a new and often more senior perspective to the discussion.

Role of supervisors: Supervisors have a great deal of influence on promotion, and there's a perception that a bad supervisor can hold back a deserving candidate. We should make creating formal career development plans for supervisees a standard practice, and a supervisor's annual evaluation should be based in part on the effectiveness of those plans. We also recommend formalizing our mentorship program, as mentors can help address areas where individual supervisors may have gaps in their abilities.

Documentation: There remain areas of our process that are not well-documented, leading to confusion for candidates. We should create a group that reviews and updates the documentation on a regular schedule.

Dossier: Preparing dossiers is time-consuming and difficult. While opinions as to whether they should continue to be time-consuming and difficult to prepare varied, we do know that as the nature of our work changes, flexibility in dossier content grows more important. We recommend an expansion of what is acceptable in a dossier, including allowing links to external resources.

We also recommend enhancing and clarifying training regarding the purpose of work samples, and suggest considering whether we want to set a limit on how many a candidate provides.

Letters of reference: Candidates consider the logistics of dealing with letters of reference a burden. We recommend revisiting the number of letters required for each rank with an eye towards tailoring clear guidelines for the number and kind for each rank, and returning HR to its role in managing the solicitation and receipt of these letters.

Assistant Librarians: To ensure a fast and positive start to careers and reduce the workload on both Assistant Librarians and (to some extent) PRC, we suggest reducing the documentation requirement for promotion to Associate Librarian to include only a personal statement, CV, and supervisor statement. Assistant Librarians should be encouraged to go up for promotion by their third year, with check-ins and procedures in place to offer next steps and support for the librarian's professional development if promotion is delayed.

PRC workload: Those who have served on PRC agree that the work is personally and professionally rewarding, but also agree that the workload for PRC is high; probably unavoidably so. To relieve some of this, we recommend requiring a smaller quorum for the review of any single dossier, such as reducing the number from five to three. To encourage a more thorough evaluation, we should also consider the addition of an outside reviewer to our promotion process.

Candidate workload balanced against reward: In addition to the specific recommendations regarding feedback, dossiers, and Assistant Librarians above, we can strike a better balance between effort and reward for candidates by offering rewards upon promotion that are not financial, or financial rewards that are not ongoing commitments. For example, at the Sr. Associate or full Librarian level we can, in addition to the change in title and salary, provide some combination of more autonomy, leave/sabbatical time, discretionary funds for special projects, or internal grants for research.

Rank-at-hire: Ranking candidates at the time of hiring presents logistical challenges for both hiring supervisors and PRC. We suggest separating PRC from its formal role in the rank-at-hire process and having the search committee make recommendations about rank along with their candidate recommendations. We also suggest that postings explicitly specify the ranks being considered when posting a job, and that we only require further review of rank-at-hire if the hiring supervisor requests a rank different from what was specified at the outset.

Any changes we decide to make to the promotion process should be voted on by the Librarians' Forum after discussion with all involved, including the Dean; the final authority over the process itself is the Librarians' Forum.

Introduction

Librarians' Forum charged the Promotion and Appointment of Librarians Task Force (PAL) with reviewing our promotion process and recommending changes to better align what we do with the goals of both individuals and the Library (see Appendix A: "Promotion and Appointment of Librarians Task Force Charge"). PAL investigated the promotion process using a variety of methods and found that, in general, although there was little consensus on why an individual might decide to go through the promotion process, librarians perceive it as important and as meeting many of the needs we have for professional growth.

In addition, people appreciate the flexibility of the promotion process overall and its ability to accommodate the broad range of skills we value and rely upon in our colleagues. They further appreciate that it is a peer-led and voluntary process (not an up-or-out, tenure-track system) that offers everyone an opportunity for both self-reflection and advancement in their careers. According to our research, we found that librarians have significantly different definitions of what the role of "faculty" means for librarians at the University of Michigan and those differing definitions have an impact on their view of the promotion process.

PAL's recommendations are based on our conclusion that, broadly speaking, there are many aspects of the promotion process that work well. However, as might be expected in a large, complex organization, there are also differing viewpoints on the process, so we typically offer more than one change to consider. Our recommendations build on the existing process as a professional development tool, while also suggesting ways to better align the amount of effort we—as individuals and as a Library—spend on promotion with its rewards while preserving the thoughtful nature of our process.

Methodology

The Task Force gathered data about the promotion process using various methods. We disseminated a 20+ question survey to the Forum's estimated membership of 155, which was at least started by 93 respondents (a 60% response rate). We spoke directly with librarians and administrators, including the Dean, in several settings. Some librarians indicated in the survey that they were willing to take part in a follow-up interviews; we spoke with 12 librarians individually. We also conducted 11 focus groups, including homogeneous groups of administrators, senior managers, Forum Board members, the Promotion Review Committee, Assistant Librarians, Associate Librarians, Senior Associate Librarians, and full Librarians.

In addition, the Task Force explored the librarian promotion process as it is done elsewhere. We gathered promotion documentation openly available from other library web sites and from the peers we spoke with. We conducted phone interviews regarding the promotion process at several Big Ten institutions, Cornell, UC Berkeley, University of Texas-Austin, University of

Toronto, Bentley Historical Library, Kresge Library, Law Library, and with one U-M clinical faculty member.

What we should maintain

Throughout our investigation, we heard a wide array of opinions about promotion, showing us that each promotion experience is personal. When going through promotion, people put themselves forward to be judged by their peers, with the potential reward of a title change and salary increase. Because ours is a voluntary process, there is a range of motivations and perspectives on what promotion, and more broadly, faculty status means in our organization.

Because there were strong feelings on various topics, there were not many definitive suggestions that everyone—or even most people—agreed should stay or change in the promotion process. Nonetheless, there was general consensus about these aspects:

- The promotion process at the U-M library works relatively well and for the most part serves its purpose, with some key areas in need of improvement, which we address below in our recommendations section, "What we should consider changing". One caveat is that there is no consensus on the purpose that promotion is supposed to serve.
- The eight promotion criteria are, for the most part, flexible and can encompass different kinds of work. In open-text responses to the question in our survey about what should stay in the process, 13% mentioned flexibility. The mean score for whether the system is currently flexible was 3.46 on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the most positive response. The majority of answers for this question that gave a score of 1 or 2 raised concerns about whether librarian roles not in public services (specifically technical services and developers) are ill-treated in the process. This is a perception that is important to recognize and address but one that is *not* backed up by promotion success data when broken down by division. (See Appendix E, "Summary of Promotion Data")
- Librarians generally like that promotion is a voluntary process that allows for a variety of career paths and plans, and favor this over a more restrictive "up or out", tenure-track culture.
- Writing a narrative, although time consuming, is beneficial for building in periods of self-reflection during one's career.
- Librarians appreciate that this is a peer-led process and see value in getting feedback from their peers on the progress of their career.

What we should consider changing

The following emerged from our research as areas that could be improved. We have listed concerns, as well as recommended solutions. Some solutions are relatively straightforward (for example, the recommendations under "Documentation"); others are more complex. Forum Board should prioritize these recommendations and facilitate a discussion on each issue, consulting with other groups as necessary (for example LHR, the Dean, etc.) to best assure that

we accomplish the objectives and the projected solutions. Any changes should be put to a vote of Librarians Forum and then documented to assure follow through.

Feedback

Candidates for promotion spend a great deal of time and effort preparing their dossiers, PRC reviews those dossiers with care, and in turn spends substantial time and effort preparing their written recommendations to the Dean. The Dean then spends substantial time reviewing the relevant materials and arriving at a decision on the candidates.

Years of expertise and thoughtful judgment are brought to bear at every stage of promotion, and generates information candidates can use to improve and move to the next stage in their career.

Our promotion process does not, however, close the loop: beyond whether they have been promoted, candidates do not know what, if anything, they'll learn as the result of these reviews. That's not to say they never get feedback; over the years, candidates have received various combinations of redacted versions of PRC's recommendation to the Dean, congratulatory letters from the Dean and PRC, and feedback from the Dean. But because what candidates receive can change from year to year, we sometimes miss an opportunity to benefit both the people we promote and the Library as a whole. We need to formalize this part of the process.

Improving feedback was by far the most common suggestion from the focus groups (See Appendix C: Summary of Focus Group Data). We agree about its importance: candidates should get guidance on recommended areas for growth from those who are charged with evaluating their growth (PRC and the Dean) and those charged with enabling that growth (their supervisor). Promotion is the ideal occasion for people to discuss both opportunities and concerns about a person's professional development.

The main obstacles for providing feedback are privacy concerns and effort. PRC's standard practice—which we endorse—is to support their recommendation to the Dean with specific examples, often via quotes from supervisors and letters of recommendation. Anonymizing PRC's letter to the Dean takes considerable effort, but there are alternatives to redacting it. We recommend the following as ways to expand those who can benefit from PRC's recommendations beyond its current audience of one:

1. The candidate's supervisor and AUL discuss PRC's findings with the candidate, and summarize this discussion in writing for future reference. Supervisors already have access to the recommendation letters, so they will not see anything new in PRC's letter. We suggest AUL involvement because they're currently absent from the promotion process, except when they directly supervise a candidate. By involving them, we both advance our One Library goals and add a new and often more senior perspective to the discussion.

2. A variation on the first recommendation: Have only the candidate's supervisor discuss PRC's letter with the candidate and create the summary document.
3. Create a rubric for PRC to use when evaluating dossiers and share the rubric results with the candidate.

Regardless of what we choose, we need to document what PRC and the Dean will share with candidates and how that sharing will happen. Documenting this will become a task for a documentation group (see "Documentation of promotion process and criteria") that oversees changes and proposes solutions to Librarians' Forum.

Roles of Supervisors

Supervisors have great influence over the librarians they supervise, as they should, and that includes the power to approve whether a person goes up for promotion, as well as direct influence on the promotion itself via the supervisor's letter of support. In our discussions, we noted a perception that this can be a problem, and although it's difficult to know how prevalent it might be, there's a strong perception that this is something we should be concerned about (e.g., "My supervisor's great, but I've heard…"; expressed by most members of one focus group; and one case where the supervisor did not support a candidate who did still go up for promotion successfully). We also heard about many supervisors with good intentions, but who don't feel able to support their direct reports because they do not have enough experience with the process.

In any case, both candidates and supervisors would benefit from more guidance, mentorship, and promotion coaching to support them in navigating the promotion process. We can't expect all supervisors to have the communication skills and time to fulfill this role, nor can we expect all librarians to seek out and find this guidance early enough in their careers. We recommend the following:

1. Supervisors create career development plans for supervisees and the effectiveness and appropriateness of these plans should be part of their evaluation as a supervisor. These plans should incorporate scheduled check-ins between supervisors and their AULs to monitor how supervisees are advancing in their careers ("I see X hasn't gone up for promotion in Y years. What's the story behind that?") These can be coupled with periodic (again, scheduled) 360 reviews, which may need to be managed by HR.
2. Formalize our mentorship program and create documentation on best practices and expectations of roles to better meet all the needs of our staff with regards to advice on promotion and career development. A mentorship committee doesn't need to match mentors and mentees, but our guidelines should specify whether this match is made by librarians, supervisors, or both, and whether mentors are assigned or chosen. (There's value in both picking someone and being assigned someone you don't know.)
3. Make promotion training for supervisors mandatory when people are hired or become a supervisor to assure that they're effective in this aspect of their role.

4. In recent years, candidates have created informal groups to help each other prepare dossiers. We recommend formalizing this and see a role for HR to help them create this group.
5. To cover the (apparently rare) cases where a supervisor is unsupportive of an otherwise qualified promotion candidate, make the supervisor sign-off on the "Request for Promotion in Rank" form and support letter optional.

Documentation of promotion process and criteria

While there is documentation for the promotion process, in focus groups we heard comments that it was sometimes out of date, incomplete, or unhelpful for some positions. For example, a focus group participant commented that "[t]o be a full librarian, the promotion documentation suggests one needs a second advanced degree but that is often ignored. It is fine that that is the case, but I wish we were more intentional and clear about it."

Additionally, the Dean currently has the authority to make changes to any part of the process (or decide whether or not to have a promotion process at all). We also heard, via the survey or focus group, that the promotion process is ultimately "at the Dean's whim," resulting in a lack of trust in the process itself.

There is no group that regularly reviews this documentation, and it is not clear how a review of the documentation can be initiated. We recommend the following:

1. Clarify who owns and can make changes to the process and create a group that reviews and updates the documentation on a specific timeline (for example, the group meets once/year to do this).
2. All changes in the promotion process should be voted on by the Librarians' Forum after discussion with all involved, including the Dean, but the final authority over the process is the Librarians' Forum. Changes should occur through a discussion of the body and a vote from the Forum.

Dossier Creation and Reference Letters

Creating the promotion dossier emerged as a significant challenge from our survey and interviews. Candidates often feel that a static PDF format with no links is limiting and creates problems when trying to represent certain kinds of work (such as the creation of a dynamic website). Currently, links are not allowed because it is hard to reconcile a strict "term of review" with dynamic content that may have to change between the time the dossier was created to the time PRC reviews it. That is a legitimate concern, but enough librarians expressed frustration with the current requirements that we recommend making some changes so all librarians feel that they can truly represent their work to PRC.

In addition, many see the current process of having the candidates manage the reference letters as burdensome. Some candidates tended to get as many letters as possible to help bolster their

dossiers, even in the lower ranks when the maximum number of letters is probably unnecessary. A change to the process that will lower the workload for PRC and the candidates would be useful. We recommend the following:

1. In the dossier, allow limited links to external resources with the following requirements:
    a. Links to external resources must not exceed a specified number (for example, 3).
    b. Each link must be annotated with specific details on the work that was done during the period of review.
    c. In cases where the site may change substantially, a screenshot can be included.
    d. As is the case with all work samples, links should represent exemplars of the candidate's work, not a complete catalog of all work they have done.
2. After the list of possible references are submitted by the candidate, HR takes over management of the reference letters. This was how it was done in the past and we think this is an appropriate practice to return to going forward.
3. Candidates receive updated and streamlined guidance from HR (for example, via new documentation) outlining how to best ask for reference letters. This would replace the current email from HR that some find confusing.
4. Tailor the limit of references to the rank, with a lower ceiling for lower ranks.
5. Candidates submit a list of possible references and PRC solicits a subset of those references. For example, the candidate submits five names and PRC chooses three of those to write letters. Here again, the numbers could again be tailored to each rank, with a lower ceiling and lower number of actual letters for lower ranks.

Encouraging the Promotion of Assistant Librarians

Professional development is important for librarians, and incorporating ongoing professional development in promotion could encourage librarians to use the process. We believe that lowering the requirements of promotion to Associate Librarian, along with closely monitoring situations where entry level librarians are not going up for promotion, would be consistent with the professional development goals outlined elsewhere in this report, as well as potentially reducing the workload for PRC. We recommend the following:

1. Revise the documentation requirements for the promotion to Associate Librarian to include only a personal statement, CV, and supervisor statement.
2. Assistant Librarians should be encouraged to go up for promotion by their third year. There should be documentation and procedures created for what needs to happen if promotion does not take place by this time. These procedures should not be punitive, but rather focus on ways to support the librarian's professional development. (See also the "Roles of Supervisors" section.)

Workload for PRC

The Promotion Review Committee (PRC) devotes a significant amount of time to their work, which is difficult for some PRC members. Other recommendations in this document could

lighten or increase the workload for this committee, and we hope that workload is taken into account in any action addressing promotion moving forward. In addition, there are specific aspects of the promotion process that seem to unnecessarily add to the workload of the committee.

There is a strong perception by some librarians that the diversity of work, especially by those in non-traditional librarian roles, is not recognized or rewarded by the promotion process. One survey participant noted that "[t]he library seems to be looking to promote certain types of work and certain types of personalities/mindsets. I have no idea how you change that when it's part of the current culture." Current and past members of PRC strongly disagree with this perception, but it is undeniable that it exists. We found evidence that some librarians even factor in the composition of PRC before going up for promotion.

Using external reviewers in place of some PRC reviewers, as is done at several peer institutions, may help reduce this perception. Adding an external reviewer for each candidate would add perspective from the candidate's specific field. Domain-specific perspectives could also mean fewer reference letters are needed. PRC would have to have a role in coordinating this.

The guidelines for promotion are flexible, which helps account for the diversity and nature of our work. As one survey participant stated, the promotion process "acknowledges that in a large research library there are many paths toward professional excellence." That flexibility comes with a cost, as it opens the door to interpretation as to how much extra documentation and how many work samples to include. In many cases PAL believes candidates are over-documenting, especially with work samples (and annotations to those work samples), which again comes at a cost to both candidates and PRC. We recommend the following:

1. Require a smaller quorum for PRC's work so that we do not require five people (three people may be sufficient) to review each dossier.
2. Replace one of the PRC reviewers with an external reviewer to the promotion process. (This solution would have benefits beyond reducing the number of PRC members needed for any individual dossier, though managing this external review would add some costs.)
3. Put a hard limit on the number of work samples.
4. The purpose of work samples as exemplars of the candidate's work should be emphasized in documentation and PRC training. Example dossiers that correctly utilize work samples should be provided for review and, in turn, dossiers that over document should not be provided as examples.

Workload for candidate balanced against the reward/title

Because we are not tenured faculty, deciding whether the effort that goes into preparing a dossier that reflects tenure requirements merits a change in title (which is not necessarily

meaningful outside, or even within, the library) and a pay raise is the first of many difficult decisions a candidate makes. And as noted elsewhere, the effort-reward balance affects others in addition to the candidate. HR, supervisors, PRC, and the Dean all spend time—and a lot of it—on promotion.

The amount of work and time involved in creating the dossier is another area of concern, about which we heard a wide variety of opinions. While many people said that it was too much work and took too much time to create the dossier, others said that the dossier was not that much work. PRC said that recent dossiers have often contained too many work samples and were too long.

Thoughts about the workload of dossier preparation balanced against the reward of successfully promoting were mixed (see Appendix C "Summary of Focus Group Data"), but the general sense was that the balance isn't quite right. Taking an imbalance as a given, then, the problem suggests where to look for solutions: To make the reward worth the effort we can reduce the effort, increase the reward, or do a combination of both. Our discussions with colleagues at peer institutions (see Appendix D "Comparative Analysis of Peer Institutions") and discussion with the focus groups has led us to the following recommendations:

1. As recommended in "Encouraging the Promotion of Assistant Librarians", we can reduce the promotion requirements for the move from Assistant to Associate Librarians.
2. Per "Feedback", we must take full advantage of PRC's work. This was the most frequently mentioned reward that was currently missing.
3. Offer rewards that are not financial, or financial rewards that are not ongoing commitments. For example, at the Sr. Associate or full Librarian level, offer one or more of the following in addition to the title change and salary increase:
   a. More autonomy
   b. Sabbatical/leave time (paid or not)
   c. Direct access to discretionary funds for special projects or research
   d. Availability of internal grants
4. Change the percent increase in salary for each level of promotion.

We can also consider moving to a full tenure system. Doing so would require a complete re-evaluation and re-thinking of our promotion process that's beyond the scope of our charge. Further, though some people we interviewed suggested we move to a tenure system, we didn't get a sense from the librarians as a whole that there was strong support for this. It is however, a common enough model among our peers that we note it here.

Rank-at-hire

Currently, PRC is involved in the rank-at-hire decision. When a search committee or hiring supervisor decides to make an offer, they recommend a rank for the selected candidate and then ask PRC to review this ranking. Our investigation found two major concerns in this area:

Logistics

The rank-at-hire process isn't as agile as it could be. PRC is very open to change, but [current Forum documentation](#) dictates that ranking can only be done by PRC after the candidate has been selected. This may slow the process and result in a candidate moving on before the Library can make an offer.

In its current form, PRC's role in determining rank-at-hire is advisory and can be overridden, and scheduling a meeting with them can delay making an offer. We need to strike a balance between involving fellow librarians in the rank-at-hire decision, not slowing down the hiring process, and not over-burdening PRC members. We recommend consideration of the following options, which are alternatives to each other:

1. Separate PRC from the rank-at-hire process. The search committee, instead of PRC, could make a recommendation about rank along with their candidate recommendations, allowing fellow librarians to participate in, but not slow down, the hiring process.
2. Only use PRC alternates for this, reducing the workload for those on active dossier review duty.
3. PRC could rank several candidates before an offer is made (e.g., upon announcement of campus visits), so that supervisors would know their options and be able to move faster once the interviews are complete.
4. Rank-at-hire meetings could be conducted virtually and documents could be signed digitally so that PRC and hiring supervisor do not need to arrange in-person meetings.

Underranking New Hires—Issues of Compensation and Equity

A more pressing concern, whose solutions go beyond the scope of this investigation, is that promotion is being used as a bandaid to address compensation issues. We heard of candidates, hired in at a lower rank due to budgetary constraints, who were encouraged to quickly go up for promotion as a way to remedy their low salary. While out of scope, the issue of promotion being used to address compensation at time of hire is important enough to address here.

Using salary instead of qualifications to determine a person's rank is a bad practice, and results in underpaying new hires. It can lead to other problems as well: Favoring over-qualified candidates over candidates who match the original job description and rank creates an uneven playing field for the application process. (For example, if we advertise a position as entry level—either in so many words or by noting the ranks we expect to hire at—but then hire someone more senior, other candidates with similar qualifications to the senior person we hired will have been discouraged from applying because of the mismatch between the type of person we said we wanted and who we ended up hiring.)

While this issue touches on rank-at-hire, the problem relates to the broader issue of compensation. Hiring candidates at a rank lower than their qualifications demand perpetuates compensation problems, lowers morale, and reflects poorly on our hiring practices. With that in

mind, we make the following recommendations knowing that they can't and don't address the issue completely; we need to address these issues outside the promotion process and move towards a budgetary model and hiring practices that removes these concerns from the rank-at-hire process:

5. We should write job descriptions listing multiple rank options whenever possible.
6. Hiring supervisors determine rank(s) when the job description is proposed and ensure they are honored during the process, from interviewing through to making an offer. If the hiring supervisor requests a rank different from what was in the job description, that decision would then need to be reviewed by an outside entity (see above) and money found to match the proposed rank.

Appendices

Appendix A: Promotion and Appointment of Librarians Task Force Charge

Charge

The Promotion and Appointment of Librarians Task Force (PAL) will evaluate the overall librarian promotion process, including but not limited to:

- Assessment of librarians and their feedback on the usefulness of the promotion process
    - Beyond the change in title and salary, what inherent value is there in librarians reviewing, evaluating, acknowledging, and celebrating each other's contributions?
    - Does the current process support these goals and desired outcomes?

- Analyzing the current promotion review process to see if it meets the needs of librarians
    - Is this the right process to meet the needs of promotion?
    - Is the current dossier structure sufficient and appropriate?
    - Does the process equitably address all types of work librarians do, especially emergent types of work (e.g., application development, web design, production, multimedia projects, etc.)?
    - How should feedback to candidates be handled without compromising the confidentiality of the review process?
    - Does the current process equitably represent the supervisor's and the candidate's viewpoints?

- Review of current documentation and procedures required of candidates to assess whether the documentation is necessary and logical
    - Is the Request for Promotion form necessary?
    - Does the current dossier include documentation that is not necessary? Is there additional or other documentation currently excluded that would be helpful?
    - Does there need to be a specific order of documentation in the dossier?

Membership and Timeline

The task force will consist of 5 -7 members who will be responsible for assessing current practices and making recommendations to the Forum by August 1, 2017. These recommendations will then be reviewed by the whole forum. The task force will not be responsible for implementing any necessary changes.

Activities

The work of the task force may include:

- Reviewing current library and human resources literature on promotion best practices.
- Surveying peer institutions on their librarian promotion processes.
- Soliciting feedback from but not limited to: current candidates, immediate past candidates, the Dean, the Dean's assistant, current and past members of the Promotion Review Committee, supervisors of candidates, and Library Human Resources.

Appendix B: PAL Survey Questions

Introduction

1. What is your current status?
    a. Assistant Librarian
    b. Associate Librarian
    c. Senior Associate Librarian
    d. Librarian

The first section of the survey focuses on your experience of the promotion process at the library.

2. Have you gone up for promotion at UM? **[Y/N]**
    Yes → **Q3**

    3. How did you decide to go up for promotion? [choose as many as appropriate]
        ● Personal decision alone
        ● Decision in consultation with
            a. Colleagues
            b. Supervisor
            c. Mentor
            d. Other **[free text]**
    No → **Q4, then to Q10 & continue with the rest of the survey**

    4. Why have you not gone up for promotion?
        ● New/relatively new librarian
        ● Hired at Librarian level
        ● Other **[free text]**

5. Were the criteria for promotion clear? [Staff Manual: Policy for the Promotion and Appointment of Librarians and Promotion and Appointment of Librarians Procedures]
    ○ Yes
    ○ No
    ○ Please explain **[free text]**

6. Were the criteria appropriate?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Please explain **[free text]**

7. There are many components to the dossier. How important or relevant do you think each part of the dossier is in making your case for promotion? **[sliding scale 1-5?]**
- ○ Reference letters
- ○ Personal statement
- ○ Supervisor support
- ○ Work samples

8. How useful was the process of notification when you found out that you were promoted/not promoted? **[sliding scale 1-5?]**
- ○ Letter from PRC
- ○ Letter from the dean

9. What could have made either of these options better? **[free text**; due to Qualtrics, this needed to be a separate question rather than part of Q8**]**

10. A few years ago, the library changed the time schedule for promotion to make it more flexible (i.e., there is no longer a minimum number of years between going up for promotion) **[Y/N]** Are you aware of this change?
- ■ Yes
- ■ No

11. Will this change affect when you go up for promotion?
- ■ Yes
- ■ No

12. Does the library promotion process reflect the varied types of work that librarians do here? **[Y/N]**
- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Why or why not? **[free text]**

13. Do you supervise librarians at UM? **[Y/N]**
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

14. Supervisors currently participate in the promotion process through a letter of support (the only required contribution). Is the letter that supervisor's write the best role for them? [Yes/No]
- ○ Yes → **Q15**
- ○ No

15. Please explain [free text]

16. What do you think the supervisor's role should be? **[free text]**

16. How else should supervisors support librarians in this process? This could include advice at each merit review; assistance with creating a timeline for the production of a dossier; or something else. **[Free text]**

The second section of the survey focuses on the value of the promotion process overall.

17 Does the promotion process help plan your career? **[Y/N]**
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

18. In what way does the promotion process help plan your career? **[free text]**

19. If we changed the promotion process, what one thing would you remove from it and why? **[free text]**

20. If we changed the promotion process, what component of the promotion process must remain and why? **[free text]**

21. Optional: If you would like to talk to us further about the promotion process, please provide your name and email. **[free text]**

Appendix C: Summary of Focus Group Data

Suggestions

Suggestion	Count
Share PRC feedback/letter with candidate	29
Additional rewards: training, research, travel, education, etc	11
Loosen up on confidentiality	10
Remove required PDF format	9
Official mentor (separate from supervisor)	9
Use a box/shared folder/digital format	6
Candidates don't track letter writers	6
Supervisor doesn't need to OK the process	5
Promotion cohort	4
Don't get feedback solely from supervisor	4
Evaluation of supervisors	4
Quotes pulled from letters for feedback (with warning to letter writers)	3
Mandatory supervisor training	3
Better long-term documentation/coaching to guide candidates years before promotion time	3
Keep feedback in the dean's letter	3
More immediate response/turnaround	2
Change internal culture towards faculty-driven approach to role in library	2
Create separate peer-review process	2
Different raise amount	2
Don't align with merit review	2
PRC should track letter writers	1
Update documentation	1
LHR tracks letter writers	1
Align with merit review	1
LHR does not track letter writers	1

n=92 quotations including one or more suggestions. Red highlighted cells have responses that directly opposed them.

Weighted statistics

	Count	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Key
Candidate workload vs rewards	18	1	5	2.6	3	1 is not at all worth it, 5 is definitely worth it
PRC Workload	8	3	5	3.9	4	1 is minimal, 5 is overwhelming
Promotion Criteria	22	1	5	3.1	3	1 is bad, 5 is good
Criteria for technical/other roles	13	1	5	3.1	3	1 is criteria do not help them, 5 is criteria are helpful
Remove confidentiality	17	1	5	3.9	4	1 means to keep confidentiality, 5 means to remove it

Feedback and confidentiality

Out of 92 quotations containing one or more suggestions, 35 were about feedback.
- 29 people said it should come from PRC
- 3 said it should come from the Dean
- 3 said it should come from quotations pulled from recommendation letters (with the writer's' knowledge)

Highly related is the interest in confidentiality, 10 of 92 specifically indicated they would like looser rules about sharing information during the process. There are, however, 7 others who pushed for continued confidentiality about the process. Overall the weighted comments' mean score was 3.9, which I would consider a desire to reexamine the overall confidentiality of the process. Getting permission from letter writers (such as a checkbox saying their comments can be shared with the candidate) was the only substantial suggestion given. The comments otherwise were focused on a more general overview of confidentiality.

Guidance with the process

Many of the responses mentioned a desire for better guidance throughout the process. The various recommendations often fell into the following forms:
- Mentorship from those who have gone through the process before, not necessarily their supervisor
- A cohort of colleagues in the library going through the promotion process at the same time
- Guidance via updated, clear and easy to find documentation on the intranet
- Example dossiers for a range of skill sets including technical and programmers

The mentorship component either existed before, or exists informally now. By creating a more formalized program for library faculty and staff it can allow for the longer term guidance that respondents wanted for the promotion process. It can also remove some of the "bad supervisor" issues as the guidance would come from the mentor and not the bad supervisor.

An informal cohort of promotion colleagues already does exist, and multiple respondents mentioned its usefulness. This could be a good check-in and momentum system moving forward.

Documentation was often referred to as out-of-date, or hard-to-find. When it was found, it wasn't always deemed useful for people of all roles in the library. While reading through the responses two people mentioned they don't understand the need of annotations, while a PRC member makes it clear how extremely useful they would be. My own recommendation is to emphasize in the documentation the exact nature of the annotation part of the work: to explain the impact of your work to those who aren't familiar at all with what you do. This step may help clear up some of the lingering problems with the inequality of the promotion process between departments. I also recommend finding past dossiers of technical/IT roles who did a fantastic job annotating and using them as examples.

Supervisors

Not a single interview/focus group mentioned an outright terrible supervisor. A couple said their supervisor wasn't going to support them going up, but then they did anyway. Everything else was a discussion of "what if" there were bad supervisors or lore about bad supervisors.

The most common recommendation for supervisors was to remove their required "OK" to go up for promotion, and to remove the requirement of a supervisor letter. While others expressed a hesitancy to do so because it would be "removing" one of the letter options for those who did want their supervisor to write a recommendation, it could be worth looking at having 5-7 letters with an optional additional supervisor letter.

Much of the other "bad supervisor" recommendations are, in my opinion, out of scope of the promotion process:
- Mandatory supervisor training within the library as a whole
- Regular evaluation of supervisors

Other problems with supervisors directly related to the promotion process (conduit for feedback and mentorship) can be remedied by following some of the other suggestions listed previously in this write-up (e.g. PRC feedback and an official mentorship program).

Candidate

With a mean ranking of 2.6 and a median ranking of 3 for the workload, the respondents seemed to say that the workload wasn't fully worth the rewards they got out of it. I think by making a few changes regarding submission format, rewards, and letter chasing this could be fixed.

Submission format

The forum board was the only interview to decisively want to stay with the PDF. Public opinion is overwhelmingly in favor of updating the submission format away from the single PDF format. The most popular suggestions were links and submission drop boxes such as MBox or Google Drive. Respondents were aware, however, that these formats can be changed at a later date, and admit that some thinking would have to go into establishing a "date and time snapshot" of the candidate's work (although trust was also mentioned).

Rewards

The most popular "reward" for the promotion system in the focus groups and interviews was feedback.

In addition to receiving feedback, respondents often included other possible rewards such as sabbatical, travel expenses, research funding, training, and further education. They viewed these as more immediate rewards than the salary bump, as well as rewards that are more flexible, and ongoing in-terms of their career development. Stagnation, lack of incentive, and boredom at full librarianship was mentioned a few times within the responses. It is possible that these rewards could help offset this feeling of stagnation and could be something to look at in future assessments if implemented.

PRC

	Count	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Key
PRC Workload	8	3	5	3.9	4	1 is minimal, 5 is overwhelming

No one on PRC considered the work "minimal". The minimum rank given was a 3 or "demanding but rewarding". The median and mean rankings of 4 and 3.9 also highlight that while the work is substantial, it isn't completely overwhelming for everyone involved.

Much of the feedback on PRC workload highlights that the most time is spent reading dossiers and writing letters. The most common suggestion is to place a limit on dossier length.

PRC was also highlighted, however, as the most common source of where feedback should come from moving forward. Other answers included what supervisors are already getting/sharing with their candidates, and the letter from the Dean. As the Dean's letter already is supplied by information from PRC it would make most sense for the recommendations to come from there. I worry, however, that this would be adding to the PRC workload as letter writing and recommendations should be a thoughtful process.

Letters

Many respondents indicated they would prefer for candidates to not have to keep track of their reference letters. There was debate as to whether LHR should pick up the role, but many people mentioned that among other universities, it is a peer driven process. The recommended form by respondents is to have the candidate supply a list of names and PRC decide who to contact.

Once again, this would add to the list of duties and responsibilities of PRC. Given how they already seemed taxed, there were no suggestions as to how to limit the workload in this way.

Rank-at-hire

This is another area I would ultimately deem out of scope. Some people do acknowledge it is used strategically, and that the promotion process is used to address salary concerns after a candidate has joined the library, but there are no suggestions/recommendations for remedying the situation. The most common refrain is about the lack of available money/budgets to fix the underlying problem.

There was one suggestion to have PRC put forward two suggested ranks rather than simply OKing whatever the hiring manager did. Does PRC, however, ultimately have the power to change this problem?

—prepared for PAL by Kathy Kosinski

Appendix D: Comparative Analysis of Peer Institutions

[See "Peer Institution Comparison"]

Appendix E: Summary of Promotion Data

Library Human Resources provided PAL with promotion data from 2007-2017. Because there is the potential for personally identifiable information in the spreadsheet they provided, the following summarizes these data.

1) Librarians across all divisions use the promotion process, and do so regularly. It's difficult to make comparisons between divisions, since how we organize ourselves has changed over the past 10 years. (We'd need to track individuals and their promotion history across these changes, which we didn't do based on privacy concerns.) That said, Operations, Publishing, and Taubman librarians appear to go up for promotion the most frequently[1], and LIT goes up the least frequently.

2) The commonly-held perception that most promotion attempts succeed is correct. Out of 129 people who submitted dossiers for review[2] since 2007, 122 promoted to the next rank. (2008 appears to be an outlier, accounting for 5 of the 7 unsuccessful promotion attempts; however, HR's files aren't complete for this year, and it's possible that some of those five were in fact successful.) Of the seven unsuccessful promotion attempts, one was from Assistant to Associate, and three each were from Associate to Sr. Associate and Sr. Associate to full Librarian.

3) When we had a rule in place requiring a minimum of 3 years between promotions[3], more than half of those eligible to promote from Assistant to Associate and Associate to Sr. Associate chose to do so. Roughly a quarter of those eligible to promote to full Librarian chose to do so. (There is some inconsistency in the data here, hence the general/rough estimates.)

4) The time between promotions from Assistant to Associate is typically 3.5-4 years, from Associate to Sr. Associate is 4-5 years, and from Sr. Associate to full Librarian is 6-7 years.

5) Looking at all promotions HR has records of since 2001, 30 librarians have gone through the process at least twice, 3 have promoted through all three ranks, and over the years 41 have maxed out at the full Librarian level. Though it's difficult to say without identifying individuals, it appears that the overwhelming majority of full Librarians promoted into that rank rather than being hired into it.

---

[1] The number of librarians in Operations and Publishing is small, so people there are either going up for promotion multiple times, transferred into these divisions after promoting, or both.

[2] 12 people announced their intent to submit dossiers and then withdrew from the process before the deadline.

[3] This ended in 2014; from 2015 on there was no minimum amount of time, so all are eligible at all times. (We only report lower bounds—and approximate ones at that—for these since it's not clear how these numbers change from year to year. Do the 8 eligible Associates in 2008 include the 2 from 2007 who didn't attempt to promote? We assume so, but it's not clear, and it's probably hard for HR to say for sure without looking at each individual and accounting for who left/retired/re-classed/etc. in the middle of a year, every year, for each rank. That's assuming they even had all the information they'd need, which they clearly don't.)