

## What Provosts Think Librarians Should Know

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## What Provosts Think Librarians Should Know

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*Slides and video are available online at  
<http://sched.co/17Jxbhp>.*

“American higher education has become... increasingly risk-averse, at times self-satisfied, and unduly expensive. It is an enterprise that has yet to address the fundamental issues of how academic programs and institutions must be transformed to serve the changing educational needs of a knowledge economy. It has yet to successfully confront the impact of globalization, rapidly evolving technologies, an increasingly diverse and aging population, and an evolving marketplace characterized by new needs and new paradigms” (Commission on the Future of Higher Education, 2006, “One University in the National Higher Education Landscape”).

Chaired by former Provost James J. O'Donnell of Georgetown, this session brought together two serving provosts and one senior officer of the Association of American Universities with a broad perspective on issues of libraries in the big research institutions. Beth Paul is Provost of Stetson University in Florida since 2009, while Jeanine Stewart has just moved from the provostial role at Hollins University to McDaniel College in the summer of 2013. John Vaughn is Executive Vice President since 1996 of the Association of American Universities. Provost O'Donnell observed that the other three had all trained as psychologists, an intriguing coincidence.

Jeanine Stewart sketched her own history as academic and leader, whimsically surmising that what she has in common with librarians is the incomprehension of the general public about the job itself. “My background includes a PhD in Psychology, which means that I have a great deal in common with the average librarian. For example, people have no idea what I actually do, but they assume they DO know. So while

librarians often hear: ‘I bet you are going to shhh me,’ or ‘what novel should I read?’ I tend to hear, ‘Uh oh, are you going to tell me what I am thinking?’ or ‘Being a psychologist must offer great preparation for working with faculty.’”

Her loyalty to libraries is remarkable. She and her husband gave a home to one of the last card catalogs being given away by a library at the University of Virginia, to make sure their children had seen such a thing—and it is still the only one they have ever seen. She takes satisfaction in seeing her students discover the power of librarianship, quoting one who was so delighted with his discovery of the services offered that he hoped it would be okay to keep it a secret!

She described the role of the provost as a busy cleaner-up of messes and setter of priorities. She frankly acknowledged that she has too little time to spend pondering the future of libraries herself and needs strong support from her director of libraries to do that.

With those preliminaries, she framed her remarks as a brief primer on managing the provost in four parts, calling it a 4-3-2-1 system.

First—the Role of the Provost—the four P's.

I have a dashboard set of indicators that I use to communicate with the academic affairs committee of the board about the quality and impact of our academic program. You may think of the provost as sitting at the top of an institutional pyramid, but I feel that I sit at the narrow space in the hourglass—pressured or influenced both from above and below. I am always mindful of the need to contextualize my work for the board.

I generally organize the dashboard indicators that I track into four categories the four P's of People,

Patrons, Policies, and Pennies. In the context of our institutional mission, I track how we are doing with regard to our People (whether we are properly training and developing staff, and the state of morale, for example); our Patrons (are we serving our students, parents, community members well under our mission); our Policies (are we clear and in compliance; are we solving more problems than we are creating); and our Finances (are we effectively stewarding the resources that come to us through tuition, fundraising, grants, etc.). This is called a Balanced Scorecard model (balancing out the tendency of many board members—who are often corporate executives—to focus excessively or exclusively on financial indicators).

I do this for the academic program as a whole, but you can adapt this approach or the approach used on your campus to bring order and clarity to your reporting of the library's impact.

Your institution probably has an academic dashboard as well. You may look for it on your IR web site to get a sense of the language used on your campus to talk about benchmarks of success. Aligning the library's reporting with the current strategic priorities for the academic program could aid in developing a powerful shared language with your provost that will help you to connect your priorities with those of the academic leadership.

The 3 in 4-3-2-1 refers to the Provost's Priorities—the three R's

While our campuses may differ greatly in size, resource base and culture, I know enough of your provosts to understand what priorities we are likely to share. We all grew up learning the 3 R's—Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic. The new R's for independent liberal arts colleges, however, are (in priority order): Risk, Revenue, and Reputation.

When anyone approaches me to gain support for something new or costly on my campus, I silently calculate the return on investment in terms of whether the expenditure will reduce or manage institutional risk (including copyright infringement, personnel training), generate or enhance revenue (including retention of students

who bring tuition dollars), or enhance institutional reputation (which enhances our ability to recruit and retain students, to get grants, and to work with donors).

My best library directors have been effective at building these priorities into their planning as well as helping me to see the connections.

The 2 in 4-3-2-1—the Library-Provost partnership—just the two of us.

I appreciate that my head librarian uses some of her time during our one-on-one meetings to tutor me on the library's big picture issues. We talk about how our program can inform critical discussions such as expanding pressure to provide online courses, the implications of MOOCs for undergraduate education, current best practices in STEM pedagogy, space and storage challenges for our collection, collaborative programming with area institutions, etc. I appreciate that these meetings offer an opportunity for me to learn from our top expert in library science.

I also appreciate having, as a result of our conversations, some cogent responses for faculty or board members who call me to share big ideas based on their viewing of last night's newscast, or their reading of the morning's higher education-related headlines.

Finally, 4-3-2-1—one big thing—Focused Strategy

The one thing above all else that I need from my head librarian and her colleagues is to stay strategically focused. Across all three campuses where I have served as a senior academic administrator, the library has been the part of the academic program with the best approach to setting departmental strategy and staying on message. Of all the reporting partnerships I have had with associate deans and directors, I have been mentored and educated in the managerial arts most effectively by a couple of gifted head librarians, one of whom is here at this conference (and she was the leader of the library that won the 2009 ACRL academic libraries award in the liberal arts category—Joan Ruelle, now of Elon, who worked with me at Hollins University). I hope you will go back to your home campus

empowered and prepared to teach someone in your administrative leadership team about what you do as well as why and how you do it.

Beth Paul from Stetson University described her own hopes for librarianship from a context of urgently required institutional change. Her time at Stetson has seen material improvement in the institution's academic and financial standing and given her ample room for reflection on what brings about university renewal in a turbulent educational landscape.

In her view, university libraries are more reflective than academic departments of what society needs from higher education. They are good at promoting interdisciplinarity, multiple literacies, nimbleness, risk taking, and adaptability. They have also been adept at finding ways to swim in, rather than drown in the ever-expanding seas of information.

The adaptive leaders she knows in libraries master many of the techniques of organizational change. They constantly adapt the business model for the library; a recent notable example is the rise of e-books and demand-driven acquisition. Their horizon is the future, prompting library leaders to be proactive rather than reaction, and seeking leading-edge change rather than lagging change. To do so requires innovation and resourcefulness.

She experiences librarians as what she called "inciters," introducing, under the guise of providing needed and welcome services, new strategies and resources as triggers for advances in pedagogy and research. They are true experts in learning and know more about students as learners—from their front line interaction and observation—than do many faculty.

Librarians function as well as hosts in and from the library itself, communicating a sense of a special kind of place: a place for wonder, a place for intellectual interaction, and a place for celebration of the life of the mind. They exemplify and reinforce the idea of intellectual identity as part of a life well lived. At the same time, they coach students to success, nonjudgmentally and eagerly.

In the heated domains of campus politics, what Provost Paul values most highly in her library colleagues is their neutrality. Librarians are trusted and apolitical colleagues, integrated into and central in the university, with a genuinely institutional perspective few others can achieve. Whether the issue is shared governance or curriculum development, librarians generally and the library dean as a member of the senior academic leadership team have a unique integrity and wisdom from which she as Provost has repeatedly benefitted. As integrators, they offer a place for interdisciplinary percolation to happen, for faculty to find ways to integrate their roles as teachers and scholars, and as cultural change agents helping to blur boundaries and eliminate siloes.

It is no surprise then that she sees library leaders as role models with many important qualities. They are curious—thinking ahead, looking to the future; they are risk takers and path makers; they are stewards of the university's mission, stewards of the university's resources. They are and have been leaders in building cultures of assessment, using data for continuous improvement, innovation, and fiscal responsibility. When they exemplify clarity of purpose and goals, they both set and help others set strategic choices and directions. Provost Paul has been fortunate in her library colleagues, but offered these reflections as a way of helping librarians see themselves as valued colleagues, leaders, and change agents who can offer their provosts valuable partnership.

From the different perspective of a Washington-based higher education association, John Vaughn took a more transinstitutional view. The Association of American Universities, where he has been Executive Vice President for many years, brings together 60 U.S. and two Canadian universities, 36 public and 26 private, with a common mission of leadership and responsibility in the domain of research universities. At that level, the issues he sees rising to common attention are fundamental ones of supporting scholarly communication broadly and deeply.

He reported, thus, as a case study on the work of the 2009–2010 Scholarly Publishing Roundtable summoned by the U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Science and Technology both to advise on strategies but also to look to build consensus among stakeholders. In a contested landscape of debate over “open access” the Roundtable sought and, to a large extent, found common ground. Their report made a core recommendation:

Each federal research funding agency should expeditiously but carefully develop and implement an explicit public access policy that brings about free public access to the results of the research that it funds as soon as possible after those results have been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

The measured judgment of the Roundtable is reflected in the 2013 Public Access Directive from the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP):

- Federal agencies with annual R&D funding of \$100 million or more provide the public with ability to freely access, search, retrieve, and analyze peer-reviewed publications and data resulting from federally funded research
- Research manuscripts made available using 12 month postpublication embargo period as a guide
- In devising its final plan, each agency should use a transparent process for soliciting views from stakeholders, and take such views into account

In August 2013, agencies submitted draft plans in response to this directive which OSTP and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) are now reviewing; their response and guidance will set boundaries for agencies to develop final plans.

The stakeholders in the scholarly communication ecosystem have responded to the OSTP directive with models for building support for the new system going forward.

One model, acronymically SHARE (SHared Access to Research Ecosystem), is being proposed from a coalition of higher education associations

(including AAU, the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities [APLU], and the Association of Research Libraries). It provides for:

- Cross-institutional network of digital repositories
- University researchers would submit articles to federal agency-designated repositories using a single, common user interface.
- This proposal seeks to be consistent with the core university mission of the creation, dissemination and preservation of knowledge.

SHARE is in the early stages of development, but its final network promises to make research articles, data, and their associated metadata freely accessible for reuse, text-mining, data-mining, and machine reading.

A coalition of publishers offer a model called CHORUS (Clearinghouse for the Open Research of the United States), a multiagency, multipublisher portal and information bridge that identifies, provides access, enhances search capabilities and long-term preservation to journal articles resulting from agency funding. The portal would build on existing infrastructure and protocols in the hope of providing the most cost effective means of meeting the OSTP directive. Uncertainty remains about terms of use for postembargo content.

Legislative alternatives to these models are also under some consideration. For example, FASTR (Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act) seeks to reduce the embargo period across the board to 6 months, raising concerns about differential impact on disciplines with different conditions of work and publication. FIRST (Frontiers in Innovative Research, Science, and Technology) is offered as a successor to The America COMPETES (Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science) Act. It would increase the embargo period to 2 years, with provisions to allow for extension 6 to 12 months further under certain circumstances. These competing legislative proposals could have the unfortunate effect of

undermining the very promising OSTP public access policy proposal.

There are other large issues in the domain of scholarly communication. A joint AAU/ARL task force is at work with focus in three areas: university presses, scholarly journals, and institutional repositories.

Presses rise to concern as books are crowded out of library budgets by journals and subsidies from host universities are reduced. The task force looks to support consolidation of digital production, but to go beyond with a possible innovative model for university subsidization of digital “first books,” with open access for all, seeking a greatly expanded dissemination of scholarship.

In the domain of scholarly journals, the task force looks to support university collaboration with learned society publishers. They will consider university funding of author publishing charges (APCs) in hybrid journals as a transition to open access, with careful attention to avoidance of “double dipping” and the expectation that support of APCs will allow reduction of subscription prices.

In the area of institutional repositories, the task force will work to increase intrainstitutional

submissions and, at the same time, interinstitutional interoperability, imagining a viable network of repositories for greater functionality, security, and preservation. This work would also seek to collaborate with research funding agencies on public access repositories in line with the SHARE model.

Vaughn’s long observation of the landscape leads him from this work to summary conclusions. What does a good provost seek from a librarian?

- Innovation
- Customer focus
- Advice and counsel
- Public presence

And what should a librarian in turn seek from a provost?

- Be a good listener
- Value students as well as faculty
- Support innovation ventures