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University of Louisiana at Monroe (ULM) Library Profile

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we have no authority to discipline PP, here were individuals who did have such authority. PP was directed to apologize to us; as of this date, we have yet to receive a meaningful apology, beyond PP apologizing for her “insensitive” tone during my family’s difficult time. This event seemed to dampen PP’s enthusiasm for trouble for several months.

A Precedent for Hostility: Enmity Between Classroom Faculty and Librarians

One might rightfully point out that PP’s behavior is not representative of her colleagues or even faculty at large. This is true, and, in fact, several members of the ULC privately contacted me to express their support for the project, the Library, and even me personally. However, many of her statements regarding the competency and expertise of librarians versus the discipline-specific expertise of traditional classroom faculty echo what may be called the historical enmity between classroom faculty and library faculty.

This enmity dates back to the mid-1950s.9 There appear to be several factors which contribute to this enmity. The most commonly cited, and to my mind most likely and frequently occurring, is communication/miscommunication. There also appears to be a failure to recognize the common cause of teaching faculty and library faculty: to educate and support the students we serve.7 However, there are also issues which are immediately relevant to both my current situation and the focus of this overall issue; it is what one resource referred to as “incendiary collections issues.”10 Related to this notion is the idea of territorial issues: jealousy of our “possession” of books and materials; our “encroachment” into the classroom; what they regard as our failure to participate appropriately in the wider academic community; and feeling threatened.8 Some of this jealousy and feeling threatened is related to another factor: a failure to understand our roles and services as librarians, as well as the services of the library itself.10 Being aware of these issues and attempting to overcome through active outreach and collaboration are key to reducing and preventing this enmity.

Do I believe that PP and other faculty members who deeply object to the deselection project were conscious, deliberate participants in this historical enmity? No. But they have clearly exhibited several of the behaviors described here. Might there be personality issues? Entirely possible. Some of PP’s colleagues, both in her department and outside of it, have reported a similar pattern of behaviors as reported here in other circumstances, so it’s not likely that PP has a special vendetta against the Library, librarians, or even me. But her behavior, quite apart from demonstrating that enmity, is also evidence of another issue beginning to gain attention in higher education: academic incivility.

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