

## ***Towards Achieving Work-Life Balance: The Librarian Context***

### ***Executive Summary***

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The Joint Administration-MSP Work-Life committee designed and administered a campus-wide survey and led focus group luncheons to shed light on the ways in which faculty and librarians at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst negotiate the boundaries between work and life. This report focuses on the specifics of balancing work and life in the librarian context. Because of the place-based nature of librarian work, working conditions for librarians depart sharply from the working conditions of faculty, generating a different set of constraints and suggested supports for maintaining work-life balance.

#### ***Key findings from this report include:***

- UMass-Amherst librarians enjoy their jobs and their relationships with one another. Several excellent supports already exist for balancing work and life: sabbaticals, parental leave, and the ability to reduce work hours. However, librarians report a lack of adequate coverage, which impairs their ability to take advantage of these benefits.
- Librarians note increased job duties make it harder to complete work tasks; working hours bleed into non-work hours as librarians have to work from home to get the job done.
- Librarians are required to be onsite, creating the feeling of always being "on call", giving them limited ability to leave their workstations during the workday as well as over traditional faculty breaks.
- Amid increasing job duties, librarians do not have time to pursue professional development despite a perceived increased demand from library administration.
- There is lack of uniformity in the application of policies and supports designed to facilitate work-life balance.
- Late career librarians need more institutional support in navigating requests for anomaly increases and transitioning from full to part-time employment.

#### ***Recommendations include:***

1. Interjecting flexibility into the library structure by generating and implementing policies for telecommuting, flextime, and job sharing.
2. Creating a mechanism to insure replacement hires for any librarian taking extended leave would ease coverage issues and develop a culture where librarians are more likely to ask for and take the leaves that they need.
3. Ensuring that new and existing policies are clear, consistent, and are applied uniformly across departments, with some mechanism in place to ensure librarians have full knowledge and understanding of the benefits available to them.
4. Developing a uniform policy to facilitate a transition to part-time employment for interested late career librarians, working with the union to ensure that such a policy would not diminish librarian retirement benefits.
5. Discussing policies for anomaly increases with librarians annually.
6. Generating a uniform library policy for breastfeeding mothers which provides lactation rooms and recognizes the time constraints of pumping.
7. Providing the same immediate access to benefits (such as parental leave) provided to tenure-line faculty to increase parity among MSP members.
8. Developing an annual workshop, modeled on those taught in the OFD, regarding writing, publishing, and conference presentation.
9. Providing professional development money alongside Librarian V five year reviews as a way to reward and promote their continued contribution to the library.
10. Shifting to a mutual mentoring program, similar to the program provided to faculty through the OFD, to provide a support network for meeting professional development aims and sharing technical knowledge cross-generationally.