From Para to Pro: Transitioning from a Staff Position to Faculty Status at an Academic Medical Library

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Setting

The Mercer Medical Library serves the patrons of Mercer University Medical School in Macon, Georgia. Currently enrolled are over 200 medical students, 195 masters students in Public Health, Family Therapy, and Certified Nurse Anesthetist programs, and just under 1,200 clinical and teaching faculty are employed at the Mercer School of Medicine.

The Medical Library is also the hub of the GaIN institutional network, which provides reference services and access to health science resources to over 50 academic and hospital institutions.

Who We Are

Staff:
• 1 full time administrative professional
• 2 full time in serials and acquisitions
• 1 full time accounting clerk
• 2 full time in technical services
• 1 full time, 1 part time in public services

Faculty:
• 1 director
• 4 full time librarians in public services (includes reference, ILL, and instruction)
• 2 full time librarians in technical services
• 1 full time Systems Librarian

Background

• June 2007, accepted into the MLIS distance-learning program at Valdosta State University
• July 2007, began working as Library Assistant II staff member at Mercer Medical Library
• May 2009, graduated from Valdosta State’s MLIS program
• July 2009, job reclassified and offered position as Reference & Document Delivery Librarian with faculty instructor rank

New Opportunities

• Elected to serve on a committee with other medical school faculty (Rules & Bylaws Committee)
• Assigned as library liaison to Nurse Anesthetists and Public Health masters programs
• Assigned as GaIN liaison to Northeast Georgia region
• Began teaching instruction classes and offering reference service
• Project management
• Tasked with the implementation and training of ILLiad™ Interlibrary Loan management system

Challenges

• New position meant coworkers unclear of new duties and responsibilities
• Patrons unaware of change in status
• Being first/early career librarian (entering the profession early in life) meant that sometimes you’re viewed as too young to be a professional

Conclusion

• Be an active and visible member of the faculty
• Serve on school-wide committees
• Outreach and liaison with teaching faculty
• Teach classes when possible
• Find a mentor, network, get your name out there
• Join professional memberships (AHIP, MLA, SC/MLA) and get involved
• Publish, exhibit, and present posters
• Take on a project and make it your own