Understanding the Experience of Full-Time Nontenure-Track Library Faculty: Numbers, Treatment, and Job Satisfaction

Introduction

Academic faculty hiring has experienced a major shift over the last forty years. While tenure-track positions were once the norm, nontenure track, sometimes referred to as contingent, positions now comprise about two-thirds of all faculty positions in the United States (Shulman, 2018). Full-time non-tenure track faculty members, often abbreviated to FTNTT, while receiving better pay and benefits than adjunct faculty members (Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016), can find their position in the academic social hierarchy to be frustrating and unfulfilling. As numbers of FTNTT faculty have reached a critical mass in the academic workforce, the challenges they face have received more exposure necessitating greater attention from university administrators and colleagues.

While the academic library is in many ways a microcosm of the academic institution, the hiring landscape for libraries is particularly complex. Some academic librarians are professional staff, some have tenure as well as faculty status, and some institutions offer faculty status but not tenure. Librarians as a group are sometimes shifted from one status to another. The researcher’s institution recently went through a status change from tenure eligible to FTNTT library faculty after a period of years in which the library could fill vacancies only with temporary nontenured positions. This policy and status change, which left the library almost evenly split between tenured and nontenured library faculty, sparked the researcher’s interest in the larger trends and challenges in FTNTT librarian hiring and job satisfaction.¹

¹ While librarians with professional staff status were not included in this study, the researcher acknowledges that they are worthy of a separate study.
The current study seeks to document whether or not numbers of FTNTT library faculty are increasing in institutions with tenure eligible librarians. Additionally, the research explores whether differences in treatment of FTNTT library faculty impacts job satisfaction, and if so, if there are best practices that would help alleviate these challenges.

**Literature Review**

Almost nonexistent in 1969, the numbers of FTNTT faculty began growing significantly in the early 1990s (Kezar & Sam, 2010, p.22). By 2003, this group had become the majority of new full time hires, at 58.6 percent. (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2008, p. 195). As of 2015, they made up 18.9 percent of all U.S. faculty (Shulman, 2018). Many authors note that women are overrepresented in the ranks of non-tenure track faculty (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Cross & Goldenberg, 2009; Kezar & Sam, 2010; McNaughtan, García, & Nehls, 2017; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2008). Contingent faculty of color are disproportionately overrepresented at two-year institutions when compared with whites. (McNaughtan et al., 2017, p. 22).

A variety of lenses have been employed to study FTNTT faculty, including feminism (Schell, 1998), activity theory (Doe et al., 2011), narrative (Ihssen & Kaurin, 2011), and cultural identity theory (Levin & Shaker, 2011). Authors have found that non tenure-track faculty lack support from their institutions in many areas. They experience lower salaries and lack of promotion opportunities, lack of job security, inadequate office space, lack of access to technology and clerical support, exclusion from participation in faculty governance, little support for professional development, uncertain academic freedom protection, and treatment as second-class citizens (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Bataille & Brown, 2006; Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007). While benefits like sick leave, health insurance, retirement, tuition reimbursement, childbearing leave, and sabbatical are more often extended to full-time than part-time faculty, FTNTT faculty are not offered these benefits equally with tenure line faculty (Hollenshead et al., 2007, p. 41). Colby and Colby contend that a lack of incentives to do research in
FTNTT jobs has led to a dearth of pedagogical research which could be improving teaching (Colby & Colby, 2017, p. 59).

Job satisfaction and the related issue of organizational commitment are prominent in studies of non-tenure track faculty. Gappa, Austin, and Trice (2007) analyzed literature on general worker motivation and satisfaction and faculty job satisfaction to develop a framework of five essential elements of faculty work: employment equity (consistent employment policies, equal access to offices, equipment, etc.), academic freedom and autonomy, flexibility (work-life balance), professional growth, and collegiality surrounding a central core of respect (p. 132). Nomura, using this framework as theoretical underpinning for a survey of non-tenure track faculty, found that employment equity was the strongest predictor of job satisfaction and commitment to the institution for FTNTT faculty. (Nomura, 2015, p. 122). Waltman et. al. (2012) conducted focus groups of non-tenure track faculty that found that teaching/students, flexibility, and exemption from tenure track related pressure were associated positively with their job satisfaction while lack of clarity, consistency, and sometimes nonexistent employment policies and lack of respect and inclusion had negative associations with job satisfaction (p. 428). Similar results were found by Levin and Shaker, who found that FTNTT were satisfied with their day to day work of teaching, but not satisfied with the professional identity constructed for them by their institutions. (2011, p. 1480)

While studies of subsets of non-tenure track faculty, like research faculty (Bergom, Waltman, August, & Hollenshead, 2010), education faculty (Garii & Peterson, 2006), technical and professional communication faculty (Meloncon & England, 2011), and sociology faculty (Spalter-Roth & Erskine, 2004) have been added to the literature over the years, so far very little literature exists on FTNTT faculty librarians. One relevant study surveyed a selected sample of 23 library administrators about their use of full- and part-time temporary faculty (Mayo, 2012). While Mayo found that the libraries
surveyed had not significantly changed hiring patterns for temporary faculty over 25 or 30 years (p. 519), some of the challenges of hiring non-tenure track teaching faculty were present in the results. Temporary librarians were not always offered the same salary or benefits as full time librarians (p.517), and experienced both stress from the uncertainty of employment and perceptions of inferior treatment (p. 518).

Related literature about academic librarians has been concerned with faculty status, tenure eligibility, and job satisfaction. Bolin looked at the web sites of land grant universities and research universities (2008) to construct a typology of librarian status based on “employee group, rank system, and tenure status (p.223).” Vix and Buckman (2012) conducted three surveys of Arkansas librarians to study student-to-librarian ratios, librarian salary, faculty status, contract length, and access to maternity leave. In a survey of librarians on job satisfaction, Horenstein found that librarians with faculty status and faculty rank had greater satisfaction with many aspects of their jobs than librarians with faculty status without rank or rank without status (1993). Perceived participation was found to be “the crucial factor” in job satisfaction, with librarians with faculty rank and status scoring higher than librarians holding either rank or faculty status but not both (Horenstein, 1993, p. 264)

**Methodology**

The study is divided into two parts, each consisting of an anonymous survey with follow-up interviews. The first survey covers use of FTNTT library faculty by library administrators. Adopting a strategy from Baldwin and Chronister’s study (2001), it directly asks how many full time library faculty of various contract types were employed in the fall semesters of 2010 and 2015 in an effort to see if numbers of FTNTT library faculty may be increasing. The survey also asks administrators to report how their institution distinguishes between tenure line and non-tenure library faculty on components distilled from the body of literature studying FTNTT faculty including Baldwin & Chronister (2001),
Gappa, Austin, and Trice (2007), and Hollenshead et al. (2007). After IRB approval, the survey was sent to 200 library deans and directors at institutions where librarians are eligible for tenure on May 3, 2016 and kept open until June 1, 2016. There is no comprehensive list of institutions that offer tenure to library faculty. To compile a convenience sample, the researcher used the Academic Librarians Status wiki (converted to a Wordpress document in 2018) (Lewis, 2007) and Bolin (2008) as a base, and then augmented the list by perusing job announcements posted on several library listservs.

The second part of the study is a job satisfaction survey intended for full-time library faculty members, tenured, tenure track, and non-tenure. The survey asks about general levels of satisfaction and institutional commitment as well as how satisfied library faculty members are with various aspects of their jobs. The survey also asks about institutional policies related to contract status that either enhance or hinder the library faculty member’s ability to do his or her job. The categories of job satisfaction (Appendix A) are drawn from several sources. Horenstein (1993) was used as a base, with other elements added from surveys given to teaching faculty, including Baldwin and Chronister (2001), Hollenshead et al. (2007), Kezar (2013), and Nomura (2015). Since the tenure status of academic librarians is not tracked by any agency or organization, the researcher gathered a convenience sample by distributing the survey on three prominent library listservs, COLLIB-L, RUSA-L, and ALCTScentral in May and June, 2016. Screening questions in the survey helped ensure that results from full-time faculty librarians could be isolated for study.

Both surveys included options for leaving contact information separate from survey responses for follow up interviews. The interviews are intended to provide some depth and context for the survey responses. Interviewees were selected from the volunteers to try to get a range of institution types, sizes, and geographical locations. Five library administrators and nine FTNTT library faculty were interviewed in May and June 2016. Of the nine library faculty, five came from institutions where
librarians had non-tenure faculty status, two came from institutions where librarians were tenure eligible, one had recent work experience in both types of institutions, and one was from an institution in which librarians were a mix of nontenure faculty and professional staff. The interviews with administrators were unstructured, starting with a discussion of policies or lessons learned in managing tenure line and nontenure librarians, but branching out into their thoughts about the status of librarians in higher education. The interviews with librarians were more structured, with questions seeking to determine whether or not they came to be in a nontenure position by choice, how satisfied they were with their current work situation, and their feelings about relationships with their institutions, colleagues, and library administrators.

**Results of the Administrator Survey**

The survey had 97 responses, which is a 49 percent response rate. However, about half of the respondents left the survey when asked to indicate the numbers of certain kinds of faculty employed in 2010 and 2015. Between 36 and 54 participants gave responses to the remaining survey questions, which would put the response rate for most questions between 18 and 27 percent. The researcher believes that respondents left because the employment data was not easy to hand for busy administrators rather than a refusal to provide the requested information. While more research is needed, the results of this survey are useful as preliminary research into this area.

The researcher calculated the percentages of FTNTT faculty reported by respondents in 2010 and 2015 and then graphed the percent change in a histogram (Figure 1). The median percent change was 0 and the mean was a 1.3 percent increase in FTNTT faculty over the five years. 36.7 percent of responding libraries had experienced an increase in nontenure track faculty, the highest being a 17 percent increase, and 23.3 experienced a decrease, the largest decrease being 25 percent. Another histogram using responses only from libraries who said they currently employed both tenure
Figure 1: Percent Increase in FTNTT Library Faculty in all Institutions from 2010 to 2015

line and nontenured library faculty had a median of 0 percent change and a mean of 1.4 percent (Figure 2). In this group, 28.6 percent of respondents had experienced no change, 42.8 percent had experienced an increase in nontenured library faculty in the last five years, and 28.6 percent had experienced a decrease.
Figure 2: Percent Increase in FTNTT Library Faculty in Mixed Contract Institutions from 2010 to 2015

When asked about expectations over the next five years, 66.7 percent of all participants anticipated no change in the numbers of nontenure track library faculty they hired, while 27.1 percent thought they would hire greater numbers and 6.3 thought they would hire fewer faculty in this category. Thirty percent of institutions that currently employ both tenue line and nontenure library faculty expected an increase over the next five years, and 23.5 percent of those who currently employ only tenure line library faculty expected an increase in this category.

In addition to numbers and hiring expectations, the survey asked administrators who hired both tenure-line and FTNTT librarians how their libraries differentiate between the two contracts.
Administrators answered yes-or-no questions regarding differences between tenured/tenure track and nontenured library faculty for the components shown in Figure 3, and elaborated with further comments for “yes” answers. The results show that between 40 and 70 percent of responding institutions treat tenure-line and FTNTT library faculty differently depending on the component.

![Figure 3: Percentage of Institutions Reporting Differences between Tenure Line and FTNTT Library Faculty](chart)

**Figure 3: Percentage of Institutions Reporting Differences between Tenure Line and FTNTT Library Faculty**

**Faculty**

Comments indicate the nature of some of the differences. The main difference in job duties, which also creates differences in merit and reappointment/promotion evaluation, is that FTNTT faculty have no or reduced expectations for scholarship, professional service, and service to the institution. The process for reappointing nontenured librarians is less rigorous, typically not going through the university rank and tenure committee or requiring external evaluations. At some institutions, promotion is not possible for nontenured library faculty.
Many libraries reported a similar merit process for the two tracks, but with different criteria matched to reduced research and service expectations. Nontenure track faculty can expect to have shorter contracts than tenure line faculty, many respondents reporting annual contracts, with varying options for renewal from no renewal option to multi-year contracts available after a certain number of years. They can expect to have no rank or separate ranks from tenure line, typically instructor or lecturer track. Some institutions give them professor ranks (assistant, associate, full) in a separate track, such as librarian or clinical professor.

Administrators also answered a question about what scholarship and service activities are expected of tenure line and nontenured librarians and a question about their eligibility for benefits and privileges (Tables 1 and 2, below). Respondents checked “yes” or “no” for both tenure-line and nontenured faculty for each component. Table 1 shows that nontenured faculty have reduced expectations for every activity except for service on internal library committees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected to:</th>
<th>Tenure Line</th>
<th>Nontenured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publish in Peer Review Publications</td>
<td>93.1</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce a professional product</td>
<td>93.1</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve a library-related professional organization</td>
<td>96.6</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate on internal library committees</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>89.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate on institution level committees</td>
<td>96.6</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Percentage of Institutions with Scholarship and Service Expectations for Tenure Line and FTNTT Faculty

Table 2 below shows that nontenured faculty are less eligible for all benefits and privileges identified, with the greatest gaps being in paid research leave, inclusion in faculty governance, tuition
remission, and merit increases. Eligibility for full fringe benefits and support for training, professional association memberships, and professional conferences is only slightly reduced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eligible for</th>
<th>Tenure Line</th>
<th>Nontenured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merit salary increases</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full fringe benefits</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>96.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support to attend professional conferences</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for professional association memberships</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid sabbatical or research leave</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition remission</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds for skills training</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>96.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in faculty governance</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service on the faculty Senate</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Percentage of Institutions That Give Benefits/Privileges to Tenure Line and FTNTT Faculty

Asked about challenges faced in supervising tenure line and/or FTNTT faculty, responses varied from none or minimal to many. Some challenges mentioned in relation to supervising tenure line faculty are motivating them to innovate or to apply for promotion to full professor, balancing support for scholarship with library operations, and resolving performance problems. Challenges mentioned in relation to supervising FTNTT library faculty are making sure that they feel part of the team, providing adequate mentoring and support, motivating them to contribute to the profession, ensuring respect, and boosting morale.

Results of the Librarian Satisfaction Survey

There were 377 responses to the survey intended for full time library faculty members. Of these, 271 responses were from full-time librarians at institutions where librarians have faculty status, and thus usable. Of the respondents, 65 percent worked at institutions where librarians are tenure eligible, and 45 percent said their institutions employed both tenure line and nontenured library faculty.
In terms of status, 38 percent of respondents classified themselves as tenured, 22 percent as tenure-track, 34 percent as nontenured and 6 percent as “other.”

The survey asked participants to rate their satisfaction with their overall career and how committed they feel to their current institution on a scale of 1 to 5. Table 3 reports the means broken down by type of contract and the categories of librarian hired by the institution. Mixed environment means that the institution employs both tenure line and nontenured library faculty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract Type</th>
<th>Career Satisfaction Mean</th>
<th>Commitment Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Participants</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Tenured</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Tenure Track</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Nontenured</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenured--Mixed Environment</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure Track--Mixed Environment</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nontenure--Mixed Environment</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenured--Tenure Line Only</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure Track--Tenure Line Only</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nontenure--Not Tenure Eligible</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Career Satisfaction and Institutional Commitment Means by Contract Type and Single/Mixed Contract Environment

While nontenured librarians at nontenure eligible institutions have higher levels of career satisfaction and institutional commitment than nontenured librarians as a whole, those who work alongside tenure line librarians have the lowest satisfaction and commitment means of any group. Tenured librarians working in a tenure line-only environment have the highest levels of satisfaction and commitment.

The researcher used one-way analysis of variance tests (ANOVA) to determine the effect of contract type on the 26 components of job satisfaction (Appendix A). The ANOVA tests whether there are significant differences between the means of three or more independent groups for a single
variable. Results showed that contract type had a significant impact on satisfaction at the p < .05 level for office space [F (2, 236) = 3.15, p = 0.045], access to technology [F (2, 239) = 4.85, p = 0.009], job security [F (2, 238) = 15.8, p < 0.01], relationship with tenured library faculty members [F (2, 179) = 3.63, p=0.028], relationship with tenure track library faculty members [F (2, 162) = 5.12, p = 0.007], academic freedom protection [F (2, 222) = 6.91, p=.001], paid research or sabbatical leave [F (2, 179) = 11.25, p < .001], and participation in faculty governance [F (2, 224) = 4.71, p=0.01].

The ANOVA test identifies significant differences in means but not between which groups the differences exist. Therefore, the researcher also ran a Tukey’s post hoc test to discover where the differences in satisfaction occurred. Results showed that FTNTT librarians’ satisfaction was significantly lower at the p < .05 level from tenured librarians on the following: salary (p=0.043), job security (p<0.001), academic freedom protection (p=0.004), paid research or sabbatical leave (p<0.001), and participation in faculty governance (p=0.008). Their satisfaction was significantly lower than tenure-track librarians on relationship with tenured library faculty members (p=0.029), relationship with tenure track library faculty members (p=0.01), academic freedom protection (p=0.005), and paid research or sabbatical leave (p=0.001). No means for FTNTT library faculty were significantly higher than any other group.

Independent T tests were run to see if there were significant differences between nontenured librarians working in an all nontenured environment and those working with tenure line librarians. Nontenured librarians working in institutions employing both tenure and nontenure were found to be significantly less committed to their institutions than those in non-tenure-eligible institutions (t_{80} = -2.33, p= .022). Comparing this to tenure line librarians, tenured librarians working in mixed contract environments also showed a significantly lower level of commitment than those in tenure line only environments (t_{63.031} = -2.344, p=.022). On individual components of job satisfaction, nontenured
librarians working in a mixed contract environment showed a significant difference from their colleagues in non-tenure-eligible institutions for one factor. They were significantly less satisfied with support for paid sabbatical or research leave ($t_{17.814} = -2.658, p=.016$). The only other significant difference found in all the groups was between tenure track librarians in a mixed contract environment compared with tenure line only institutions. Tenure track librarians in a mixed environment were significantly less satisfied with support for training and professional development ($t_{55} = -2.419, p = .019$).

Results of the Interviews

Interviews gave depth to some of the areas of dissatisfaction shown to be statistically significant for FTNTT library faculty in the quantitative analysis of survey responses. Support for research turned out to be a concern for many of the interview participants. Even though nontenure-track jobs oftentimes are not structured to accommodate scholarship, many institutions require scholarship for promotion in rank. The nontenured librarian seeking promotion frequently must struggle to make time, relegating research to off-work hours. One says, “I mean, it seems like the publishing and the presenting is required whether you’re on the tenure track or not because either you want to get promoted or you want to upgrade your job to a tenure track job somewhere else, so you’ve just got to do it.” Even if not required for promotion, many nontenured librarians want to do research because they enjoy it, believe they have an aptitude for it, and wish to contribute a voice to the profession. One participant who had held a tenured position in the past stated that while she contributes to the profession through service, “I do feel not quite part of the professional conversation in the same way. My voice isn’t out there but also I don’t maybe read in the same way either.”

Some library administrators of nontenured library faculty try to be flexible and accommodate the desire to research. One administrator told me “Our interpretation on our campus is that it doesn’t
say that they can’t do research, it just says they don’t have to do research. ... these are valued employees, valued faculty members and they’re going to be even more valuable if we allow them to do research if they want to.” But sometimes directors do not understand why nontenured librarians might find engaging in research to be valuable. One librarian at a library that hires both tenure line and nontenured faculty said of her boss “he actually discouraged me from trying to go through IRB for this because I was like, ‘What if I wanted to write a paper or make this into a bigger research project?’ And he was like ‘Why would you want to do that?’” It also can be challenging for nontenured librarians to secure research funding because at their institution the principal investigator for grant purposes has to be a tenure-line faculty member.

Relationships with tenured and tenure-track faculty members was another area where satisfaction levels of nontenured librarians were significantly lower than other groups. Librarians from all-nontenured environments stated that relationships internal to the library were generally satisfactory, but relationships with the university as a whole need improvement. Neglect seems to be the most common problem. One nontenured librarian reported that service opportunities at her institution are frequently but unintentionally worded in such a way that librarians cannot participate because of their status. “There’s a lot of that kind of laziness of language, I guess you could say, or imprecision that we really need to pay attention to, because otherwise we end up out of things that we otherwise could and should be a part of.” Another had the following story to tell about being excluded from new faculty orientation because of her status as a certain kind of nontenured faculty group called Academic Professional:

“My first month there was new faculty orientation, and I literally received no – nobody reached out to me, nobody enrolled me in new faculty orientation, nobody asked me to go. I actually had to present to the new faculty in my first month of being a faculty member at [institution omitted], and I asked why I wasn’t a part of the new faculty orientation, and they said ‘Well, you’re AP faculty.’ And I was like ‘Yeah, AP FAC-
UL-TY’. (Laugh) And the response was just like, that’s faux faculty, you’re not like teaching faculty, so you’re not like real, bona fide faculty.”

In addition to relationships outside the library, nontenured librarians working alongside tenure line librarians reported unsatisfactory experiences with internal relationships. One says, “You definitely see where status has an impact on whether or not people will cooperate with you and what sorts of things they ask you to do or don’t ask you to participate in.” Another, who was the only nontenured librarian at her library, keenly felt a sense of not belonging anywhere. Foremost in her mind was the lack of support she had received for her upcoming contract renewal, requirements and procedures for which were generally available on campus but which no one had made her aware of over the years she had been there. “Will I get renewed based on these requirements or not” she asked, “because some things haven’t been followed. It almost seems as though they are kind of making it up as they go, and I can only hope that I don’t end up losing because of it.”

Salary is another area of dissatisfaction that came up in both quantitative analysis and interviews. Two of the interviews provided evidence that nontenured librarians can have lower compensation and fewer opportunities for promotion than tenure line colleagues. One administrator said she receives more funding for tenure line raises than contract line raises every year, which over time has led to a gap in compensation for nontenured librarians. “I’ve tried to be supportive of anything they want to do that will make their jobs feel more engaging,” she says of the nontenured librarians, “but the risk there is pretty soon they say ‘Wow, I’m doing all this work, and I’m doing it well, and what’s that getting for me?’” One of the nontenured librarians interviewed reported that she had been hired at the same time as several tenure-line colleagues and was offered a salary comparable to a tenure-line librarian. However, at the time of the interview the tenure line librarians were soon to receive tenure and promotion, a path not available to her. “And I think at that point that will be a slight decrease in my job satisfaction. Not that I would begrudge it to them. That they’re getting that reward, because hey,
they earned it. But the fact that I’m not in that same category with the same opportunities that they are.”

Even though academic freedom and participation in faculty governance surfaced as statistically significant influences on satisfaction, the majority of librarians interviewed did not seem concerned about either. One librarian indicated that her nontenure status would not keep her from speaking out, but “being on the nontenure track and having that distinction of inequality will make me think very hard about the way I couch the message.” Librarians interviewed seemed to be in general satisfied with serving on many but not all university committees and they accepted not having a vote on some things, for example, on curricular matters. The major exception was one librarian who reported that librarians’ nontenure status at her institution excluded them from being eligible to serve on the academic core curriculum committee at a time when General Education was being revised. As a result, “Every other core competency from [accrediting body omitted] made it into the explicit language of the core curriculum revision except for information literacy.” A nontenured librarian from another institution that allows librarians to serve on curricular committees verified that strategic participation on university committees allows her to “keep bringing the library and information literacy to the attention of the committees and the Provost and people who actually have the power to put it in the curriculum.”

Job security was a concern for interviewees, not so much in terms of reappointment, but in terms of severe budget cuts and financial strife. Nontenured librarians frequently are continually employed, meaning that they have no legal protection against losing their jobs in a potential closure. One participant said, “when it comes to possibly cutting positions, we could just as easily end up on the chopping block as hourly staff and other folks. I think tenured faculty have a security that the rest of us don’t have as far as that is concerned.” Another observed that tenured faculty could be named as plaintiffs in a lawsuit opposing a potential closure, whereas the librarians could not. Job security was
cited by one librarian for its relationship to salary, as it allows increased earning potential over the long term.

**Discussion**

Results from the administrators’ survey indicate that numbers of FTNTT faculty in libraries is growing at institutions where librarians are tenure eligible, but at a slow rate of between 1 and 1.5 percent over five years. The current rate comparable to the current growth rate of FTNTT faculty in all U.S. colleges and universities, which was 3.3 percent between 2005 and 2013 (Shulman, 2017) but did not change between 2013 and 2015 (Shulman, 2018). The percentage of growth is slightly higher in libraries that already hire nontenured librarians, 1.4 percent as opposed to 1.3 percent, with nearly 43 percent of these libraries reporting an increase in nontenure hires in five years. An important finding is that nearly a quarter of responding library administrators that currently employ only tenure-line faculty expect to increase numbers of nontenure hires in the next five years. Even though overall growth is slow, if these expectations are realized there will be more library administrators managing librarians with multiple contract types. More research into library faculty hiring will be needed to see if library administrators’ expectations become a reality.

Results of the administrator survey show that some of what nontenured library faculty experience is similar to nontenured teaching faculty because they are differentiated from tenured colleagues in various ways. Their contracts carry reduced expectations for scholarship and service, which affect how they are evaluated for reappointment and merit and their eligibility for research leave. Their contracts may carry lower salaries, shorter contract length, ineligibility for merit increases, reduced opportunity for promotion, and less of a voice in faculty governance. Unlike nontenured teaching faculty colleagues, nontenured librarians do not seem to be experiencing as much unequal treatment in terms of office space, access to technology or administrative support, and support for professional
development. The administrator survey revealed only slight reductions in support for conference attendance, professional association membership, and skills training between tenure line and nontenured librarians. Office space surfaced as a significant area of dissatisfaction from the ANOVA tests, but did not remain significant upon further post hoc testing.

Differential treatment evident from survey results is likely the cause of lower job satisfaction among nontenured librarians compared to other contract groups, particularly those who work alongside tenure line librarians. Of the factors found in the quantitative testing to be significant influences on job satisfaction for nontenured librarians, research support, salary, job security, and relationships with tenure line faculty were of most concern to interview participants, with participation in faculty governance surfaced as important to librarians when it comes to making sure that information literacy is included in the curriculum. With more mixed contract library work environments expected in the near future, the question becomes how can we counteract the effects of nontenure status on job satisfaction and commitment and ensure that nontenured library faculty are reaching their full potential professionally and as part of the campus community?

The administrator and librarian interviews point to a few courses of action that could help in both single and mixed contract environments. One is to provide support for FTNTT librarians who want to do research. The opportunity to take some sort of research leave or to have a job structure that allows engagement in research could increase satisfaction among nontenured librarians by allowing them to develop professionally and plan their future careers. Engagement in research by nontenured library faculty could also lead to findings that could be valuable for the library in developing and improving services. Another action that surfaced in the interviews is the importance of ensuring that FTNTT librarians are provided with professional support such as participation in new faculty orientation and coaching on preparing dossiers for contract renewal and promotion. Including nontenured
Likewise, FTNTT library faculty should be included in faculty governance. Internally, they should be members of the library faculty governing body and have a vote. Externally, while opportunities may differ institution to institution, they should be involved as much as is possible with strategically relevant university committees. One interesting finding is that exclusion from committees at some institutions may not be intentional but simply a lack of awareness of the language that signals that nontenured library faculty may participate. Exploration of possibilities and negotiation could result in service placements that would allow nontenured library faculty greater engagement with faculty members across campus and the potential to make significant contributions to the institution’s mission.

Salary and job security are more difficult issues to address as they are often controlled by university-wide policies out of the library’s control. The best solution would be to have the flexibility to offer similar salaries to incoming librarians in different contracts who have similar job responsibilities and experience, or to offer a new library faculty member a choice of contract in which they would be compensated more for choosing a contract with higher research expectations. As the administrator interviewed suggests, finding challenging assignments and other ways for nontenured librarians to engage with their jobs may help to counteract a situation in which salary barriers are impossible to break down. There may be other rewards that could be offered, such as personal time or professional development support, that could ease the differences. In terms of job security, some libraries have been able to implement a solution called continuing appointment to combat the insecurity of short-term contracts and multiple renewals. Continuing appointment is a “tenure-like” status in which library faculty can achieve an assurance of long-term employment after a probationary period. It provides nontenured librarians with a promotion path and the security to build a long-term career. (American University, 2015). Continuing appointment helps counteract potential bifurcation that affects the
satisfaction and commitment of both tenure line and nontenured librarians by minimizing contract differences and the effects of social hierarchy.

Conclusion

Just as in teaching departments, academic libraries who in the past employed exclusively tenure-line library faculty are hiring increasing numbers of non-tenure eligible librarians. FTNTT librarians frequently experience differences in treatment from tenure-line colleagues. They experience lower levels of job satisfaction compared to tenure line librarians, with the lowest levels existing in institutions where FTNTT librarians work alongside tenure-line librarians. In order to improve FTNTT job satisfaction and retention in academic libraries, whether nontenure-only or mixed-contract, participant interviews point to strategies that minimize differences between FTNTT and tenure-line contracts. Research support, professional support for onboarding and reappointment, participation in faculty governance, equitable salaries, and more secure contracts are factors that would help nontenured library faculty engage fully with their jobs and the community and potentially increase their satisfaction and productivity.

Reference List


Twenty-Six Elements of Job Satisfaction Used on the Librarian Survey*

Terms of Employment
Salary
Benefits
Office Space
Access to technology
Access to administrative support
Job security
Opportunities for promotion or advancement

The Work Itself
Primary job duties (e.g., cataloging, instruction, collection development, etc.)
Relationship with students
Academic freedom protection
Professional Autonomy
Opportunities for innovation or creativity
Workload
Work/life balance

Professional Growth
Support for attendance at professional conferences
Support for training and professional development
Support for paid sabbatical or research leave

Respect and Inclusion
Relationship with tenured library faculty members
Relationship with tenure track library faculty members
Relationship with non-tenure track library faculty members
Relationship with library administration
Relationship with teaching faculty
Relationship with college or university administration
Participation in planning and decision-making at the library level
Participation in planning and decision-making at the college or university level
Participation in faculty governance

*The elements were not listed in this order on the survey. The organization by category is for the benefit of the reader to understand relationships among the elements.