

## ROLE of HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARY DIRECTOR

- Communicating effectively is crucial to supporting all areas of the mission of the institution.
- Library directors may find themselves in a variety of organizational types which employ many different types of position titles.

Directors hold positions of broad responsibility and high visibility. They support all the missions – education, research, clinical practice, and community service – of their institutions. They work with all components of the academic health sciences center – schools, hospitals, centers, and institutes – and often external communities as well. Directors need to be knowledgeable about information issues, and they are responsible for envisioning the future of the library and working to achieve that future. They must be able to communicate effectively and persuasively with all their constituencies to build a shared vision for the library. They must function successfully in a political environment to secure the support necessary to attain that vision. They must develop campus-wide visibility for the library that will ensure priority status for library resource needs and program development [19].

The extensive range of leadership skills identified as important in business and academic settings [20-22] is also applicable to directors of academic health sciences libraries. Their potential leadership responsibilities include [23]:

- acting as chief representative and spokesperson for the library
- participating in institutional governance
- functioning as liaison with stakeholders within and outside the institution
- monitoring critical issues in the external environment
- negotiating and advocating for the library
- fundraising and grantsmanship
- leading library planning, operations, and staff
- supporting active learning among staff
- communicating effectively within the library, within the institution, externally
- acting as change agent and entrepreneur; promoting and leading innovation
- team building
- working across boundaries and effectively influencing others
- allocating resources, and
- advancing the profession through scholarly publication and leadership in local, regional, and national associations.

There are different models for the organizational structure in which the director position operates. In addition to traditional library services, areas that may fall within the director's purview include academic or research computing, informatics, educational technologies, knowledge management, repositories for publications, data services, innovation spaces, archives, and other special collections. Directors may oversee other library organizations such as regional consortia or networks. The most extensive example of this is the Network of the National Library of Medicine, which extends both fiduciary and service responsibilities to selected academic health sciences libraries throughout the U.S. The scope of library services, including outreach to the community, may differ in public and private institutions; and may encompass library services to subsidiaries, partners, or affiliated health institutions. The AAHSL Statistics may provide helpful information about comparable libraries.

The reporting relationship may also take different forms [26]. Directors often report to an officer in the academic health sciences center, such as a provost, vice chancellor, vice president, or dean. In institutions where libraries are part of the university library system, directors can report to the university librarian, or there may be a dual reporting relationship with an academic health sciences center leader. Whatever the organizational norm for the reporting structure, the director will also need to function in a professional context that requires numerous informal linkages and collaboration. For example, libraries today often leverage their resources through joint licensing of electronic resources, and the director must establish and sustain such relationships over time.

Institutional circumstances will influence the background sought in candidates, including educational credentials or experience. A variety of position titles reflects the range of responsibilities the position is expected to assume. In addition to director and associate university librarian, sample titles include assistant dean for academic information, associate dean for information resources and systems, associate vice president for educational resources, and assistant vice chancellor for library services and instructional technology.