



ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEASTERN RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Survey Report

ASERL Competencies For Research Librarians

Usage at ASERL Member Libraries

Fall 2003

Survey Response rate

On November 17, 2003 ASERL distributed an online survey to all members to determine their uses of *Shaping The Future: ASERL's Competencies for Research Librarians*. A copy of the survey is attached in Appendix 5. Of ASERL's 43 members, 29 of the 37 academic members (78%) responded to the survey. No state library ASERL members responded.

Competencies Usage rate

Fifteen of the 29 respondents (52%) indicated they had used ASERL's Competencies for Research Librarians as a part of hiring/performance review/promotion processes at their library.

- 53% of those sites that had implemented the had referred to ASERL Competencies in position announcements/job advertisements to recruit/hire new staff.
- 40% asked job candidates about their familiarity with ASERL's Competencies during interviews.
- 53% have used ASERL's Competencies as part of performance evaluations of existing staff

Reasons for Non Use

- Nine of the 14 sites that have not used the ASERL Competencies for HR processes (63%) indicated an interested in using them, but had not yet made time to implement the new processes.
- Five sites (35%) reported bureaucratic difficulties in changing HR processes make it difficult/impossible to use the ASERL Competencies
- No respondents (0%) reported that the ASERL Competencies were irrelevant to working in their library
- Seven sites (50%) reported "other" reasons for not implementing the change, including:
 - Don't want to be tied to one set of competencies.

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- I must admit that I have not engaged our librarians in discussion on the competencies. In part it is because there has not been a felt need and in part because they represent the basic expectations we have in place.
- The Competencies definitely have some relevance for us, most likely in the recruiting and hiring process. I think we will be interested in adapting them to our environment here because we've already worked with a more basic set of "reference competencies"

Other comments/suggestions for improving the ASERL Competencies

- We will want to adapt the competencies locally. We think they are most useful for us in considering what kind of librarians we want to recruit -- and, with some adaptation, they may prove useful in evaluating our librarians. I think the greatest long-term use for us, however, is to use them as a professional development tool to educate, mentor, and guide, rather than strictly as an evaluative tool.
- We need to discuss and promote the ASERL competencies to our own librarians. I anticipate we'll do this through some internal staff development sessions. In addition, to support ASERL competency #3, we need to make a stronger effort to ensure all our librarians are knowledgeable about broader higher education issues and trends.
- I have no suggested changes for the document. We may be considering how to cite the competencies in our position descriptions in the future, since our turnover events tend to be librarians who decide to leave research librarianship for other types of academic librarianship practice.
- I think that the biggest problem we will have is trying to assess the competencies, especially if we do this in annual evaluations.
- So far they are working well for us.
- With great respect for the work that has been done and the individuals on the group, I offer a personal observation at this point (and will make a point to introduce the competency document to the organization). I think the 1st and 2nd competencies are too generic and the distinguishing characteristics of a research librarian don't appear until the 3rd and appear somewhat in the 4th--as such the document doesn't seem as strong or useful as it could be. In addition, I think there are some distinctive factors described in prelude, "The Research Library of Tomorrow" and they need to be translated into specialized competencies that the research librarian should have now and will need in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1.

Sample Wording Used in Job Advertisements

- “The University of Louisville Libraries is a member of the Association of Research Libraries. The Libraries utilizes the ASERL Research Librarian Competencies when considering candidates for faculty positions. The competencies may be reviewed at the following URL.
<http://www.aserl.org/statements/competencies/competencies.htm>”
- “Successful candidate should possess ASERL's Competencies for Research Librarians listed at www.aserl.org”
- Other sites used wording taken from Competencies as appropriate for the position, such as:
 - An ALA-accredited MLS with a strong academic background or professional reference and liaison experience
 - library experience in print and electronic library instruction and a strong commitment to teaching
 - strong and effective interpersonal, communication, & computer skills
 - demonstrated innovative and effective training/teaching skills with group, class, and one-on-one settings
 - knowledge of instructional concepts, methodologies, and technologies and the goals of information literacy
 - commitment to excellence
 - adaptability, flexibility, ability to contribute collegially and productively in a team environment
 - ability to adapt emerging technologies to enhance user services in a collaborative, busy, and changing public services unit
 - strong public service attitude
 - knowledgeable about technology and applies it to improves services
 - uses data driven decision making
 - communicates effectively with university community
 - work effectively with diverse groups
 - partnerships with other staff and librarians
 - communicates effectively the role of a n academic library in the higher education environment
 - understands role of scholarly research in the academic environment
 - Provide divisional leadership, management and direction that anticipates future trends in an evolving information environment
 - Develop and implement strategies to maximize divisional efficiency and productivity while maintaining high quality standards
 - Participate fully in the expansion and promotion of the libraries’ extensive digital collections and initiatives
 - Serve as a member of Libraries’ administrative team and collaborate across all divisions to provide strategic leadership for the USF Libraries

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- Maintain excellent working relationships with the institution's multiple campus and special libraries as well as with the libraries' external partners
- Actively foster a diverse work environment
- Participate to the fullest extent possible in programs, cooperative library efforts and professional activities with partners on and off campus and in activities of the ARL, the Tampa Bay Library Consortium (TBLC), Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL), and other organizations.
- Excellent communication skills, both oral and written; strong interpersonal skills;
- Demonstrable ability to work collaboratively with library staff and academic faculty
- Strong commitment to customer service and satisfaction
- Ability to work effectively in a team environment
- Demonstrated knowledge of research and reference materials in (subject area), in traditional and electronic formats
- Proficiency in the use of electronic databases and web-based information delivery
- Demonstrable skill in library and information literacy instruction.

Appendix 2.

Sample Wording Used During Interviews

- What are important characteristics and/or skills for a reference librarian to have? How will you promote effective communication with departmental staff, library-wide, campus-wide and off-campus? How will you encourage continuing education/training? What innovative measures have you taken in dealing with library technology?
- Please give an example of a performance or quality improvement that you have implemented. How did you go about the implementation? What were the results?
- Several respondents noted that the wording of interview questions varies based on the position description and job ad: "Questions are tailored to the position and relevant competencies are included in the interviewing process."

Appendix 3.

Sample Uses of ASERL's Competencies to Evaluate Existing Staff

- All aspects of the employee's assigned duties are evaluated in part by ASERL Competencies and future goals are set keeping those competencies in mind. The following is a list of areas that are addressed during a faculty evaluation:
 - Command of subject, ability to identify, locate and effectively utilize both print and electronic resources
 - Communication skill in interpreting/teaching library materials to users
 - Interacting with staff, library clientele; ability to work well with others
 - Organizational and administrative skills
 - Initiative and resourcefulness in developing resources
 - Contributions toward providing quality library service
 - Level of research/creative contributions

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- Service contributions
- Professional development
- New faculty receive copies of the ASERL Competencies and are expected to use them in preparing performance, promotion, and tenure packets.
- Referred librarians and their supervisors to the Competencies document and distributed document to all professional staff with general, non-specific instructions that the criteria identified in document should be considered as part of criteria in evaluations.
- We are actively working to incorporate the ASERL competencies into our performance evaluation for 2004/2005. No format has been designed as of yet.
- ASERL Competencies come in to play in evaluating library faculty in the following areas: 1) job performance, 2) research and publication (scholarly pursuits), 3) service, and 4) extension. We have no standard form.
- Position descriptions for library faculty incorporate many of the competencies concepts and individual librarians are evaluated on how well they perform them
- We are required to use a university human resources performance review instrument. We are able to customize the "primary job responsibilities" section to reflect individual positions. The "primary job responsibilities" include wording similar to that found in job descriptions and advertisements as mentioned above. Additionally, generic "performance factors" established by human resources reflect some portions of the ASERL competencies such as the following: knowledge of work, quality of work, initiative, cooperation, problem solving, planning and organizing, communications, and leadership.

Appendix 4.

"Other" uses of the ASERL Competencies

- Although we do not use the formal language, we do advertise for the knowledge, skills, and abilities represented by the language of the competencies. We'll do a better job of referring to the language in future searches.
- At our library, we encourage support staff to continue their educations, and many of them choose to pursue library science degrees and become professional librarians. Although many of these employees have worked in academic libraries for more than five years, I am amazed by those who are not familiar with the responsibilities/expectations of research librarians. *Shaping The Future* not only informs these potential librarians of what is expected of them professionally, but also provides information on libraries today and tomorrow.
- Background material for performance objectives
- Distributed to all support staff as an FYI to inform them of what criteria are that Tulane expects in their librarians and future librarians. Especially useful for support staff considering librarianship as a career.
- Have found the attributes described in the Competencies useful in developing position descriptions, questions to ask of references, and in interviews.
- We have incorporated the ASERL Competencies in a very broad sense.

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- We have used them as part of the Skills section in professional library job descriptions for our non-tenure track career track (which we have recently developed). We plan to incorporate them in job descriptions for tenure-track faculty also. We will be using them in job ads in all future positions that we advertise.
- We will be working with campus Career Services this year to promote careers in librarianship, and I plan to connect the ASERL competencies with knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests of our students. Although Wake does not have an MLS program, many of our students go on to graduate school and we want them to consider careers in librarianship.
- Write position descriptions; develop library faculty awareness of desired qualities in hiring research librarians.

Appendix 5. Survey Form

ASERL Competencies for Research Librarians Usage Survey Fall 2003

INTRODUCTION: Please forward this short survey to your Human Resources manager or other department head(s) who may have used [ASERL's Competencies for Research Librarians](http://www.aserl.org/statements/competencies/competencies.htm) (link to <http://www.aserl.org/statements/competencies/competencies.htm>) as part of your library's hiring/performance review/promotion processes.

PURPOSE: The information gathered from this survey will be compiled and posted on the ASERL website. It is designed to be a means of informing ASERL members and others on how they can put the ASERL Competencies into use within their libraries.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: December 31, 2003

1) ASERL member name (drop down menu of all ASERL members)

2) Have you used ASERL's Competencies for Research Librarians as a part of hiring/performance review/promotion processes at your library? (radio buttons)

- Yes
- No

3) If yes to #2, please check the item(s) below that reasonably describe how the competencies have been used within your library: (check boxes)

- Referred to ASERL Competencies in position announcements/job advertisements to recruit/hire new staff

If yes to above, please send actual wording used by your library in position descriptions/job advertisements and/or other HR processes: (free text box)

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- Asked job candidates about their familiarity with ASERL Competencies during interviews

If yes to above, please send actual wording used in interviews: (free text box)

- Used ASERL Competencies as part of performance evaluations of existing staff
If yes to above, please describe or send additional information (e.g., sample performance evaluation checklists/forms, etc.) via email to jburger@solinet.net (include free text box and email hot-link)

- Other: Used ASERL Competencies in other ways (*please describe*). (free text box)

4) If no to #2, please indicate the reasons for not using the ASERL Competencies as part of hiring/performance review/promotion processes at your library. (check boxes)

- I want to use ASERL's Competencies in hiring/performance evaluation/promotion, but I haven't had time to implement the change
- Bureaucratic difficulties in changing HR processes make it difficult/impossible
- I don't think ASERL's Competencies are relevant to working in this library
- Other reasons (*please describe*). (free text box)

5) Please list any suggestions for changing/improving the ASERL Competencies that would make them more useful. For example, are there other competencies that should be included? (free text box)

THANK YOU for your time and efforts!

Please click the "Submit" button below to send your information to ASERL.

CONFIRMATION TEXT: (after clicking "submit"): Your survey has been submitted to ASERL.

Thank you for your feedback.

ASERL Home Page (link to www.aserl.org)

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