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LIS 656 – Academic Libraries

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Academic Library Interview

Academic institutions around the world, no matter how big or small each one is, diligently operate everyday to fulfill the purpose preparing the next generation for top-quality job positions that require the know-how to effectively perform in them. All the departments work together to achieve this ultimate goal. Everyone, both on and off campus, has a role to play in the daily life of the academic realm. However, in my own personal opinion, there is one entity on campus that is at the heart of what all the other departments do. Without this particular entity, none of the other departments would be able to carry out their duties and responsibilities. I would even go as far as saying that the entire academic structure would probably crumble without this entity providing the support needed to keep it standing tall.

That entity is the academic library, which is home to countless numbers of resources that everyone on campus makes use of. From the students who need to study and complete assignments to the faculty who need sources to supplement their classes and assignments, the academic library is vital component that keeps the entire machine that is the institution running smoothly. No matter how much relevance that a class or degree has to the library, the library itself still plays a major role in each and every one of them.

That was one of the things that I discussed with my chosen interviewee for this assignment. My interviewee is the Assistant Provost for Administration at Campbell University. Basically, an Assistant Provost for Administration helps the provost oversee their assigned department, as well as help them get the information they need to make decisions in regards to budgets and academics. What makes her qualify for this particular assignment is that she oversees the head of the library. From 2008 to 2011, she was the director of library services before she took on the role of Assistant Provost for Administration. Throughout the interview, I asked her a series of questions that I thought was relevant to the daily life of an academic library. She also gave me a tour of the Campbell's library as well, which is called the Wiggins Memorial Library. It provided a wonderful supplement to the interview that I conducted. In this paper, I am going to share the wonderful and insightful experience I had during the interview. For the purpose of maintaining her confidentiality, I will be referring to her by the name "Scholar" throughout this entire paper.

One of the first questions that I asked Scholar is the relationship that the library has with the academic community, which is made up of both the students and faculty.

When I asked this question, the first thing she immediately said was that it is becoming increasingly more important that libraries reach out to the faculty. I concur with this, because this statement will eventually become the philosophy that all academic libraries are eventually going to have to adopt. According to Scholar, her library is working with the faculty by assigning a library liaison to each academic field. They are working with classes like English classes to promote the use of the library's collections.

In the textbook, *Academic Librarianship* by Edward G. Evans and company, it talks about how research and scholarly activity is key in develop academic library services. According to them, "Research/scholarly activity is a key factor in planning and developing academic library services."¹ Since research is a big part in responsibilities of the faculty, it is important that academic libraries use this to strengthen their relationship with them. All of this is for the purpose of convincing the faculty to become more willing to work with the library. After all, both sides have the same goal, which is to make sure that the students are provided with the best resources so that they can get the best education.

While the library and the student body have a good relationship, it is still important that the library maintains, as well as strengthens, that relationship. Scholar agrees with this as well, and so one of the things that she and the library do on a regular basis is that they do promotional events to make the students aware of the services and resources that the library has. For example, one of the events that the library does is that they do a trivia night, where students get into teams to answer questions that are created by the library staff. These questions cover subjects from academic topics to social topics and more. Lastly, the library also reaches out to the students through the use of social media platforms. Since social media has become one of the main forms of communication, it is important for all libraries to have some kind of social media presence. According to Scholar, they make sure that they keep the main page updated at all times. As far as reaching out to the local community is concerned, she said that they do some community outreach as well, but not a lot. That makes sense, because Campbell University is a private university.

Speaking of the university, I was extremely curious as to what role does the Wiggins Memorial Library have in the governance of the university. It was one of those questions that I absolutely had to make sure I asked before I concluded the interview. When I asked Scholar what role the library plays in the governance of the university, she said that governance is made up of the following:

- Academic Affairs
- Student Life

¹ Edward G. Evans, Stacy Greenwell and Camila A. Alire, *Academic Librarianship*, 2nd Ed. (Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman, 2018), 61.

- Finances
- Advancements

In the case of the library, it falls under the “Academic Affairs” category, which is under the jurisdiction of the Academic Provost. Part of her job as the assistant to the provost is that she informs them of the status of the library, which is part of their decision when they go to the budgetary meetings. Overall, the library tries their best to plead their case before the provost so that they could get budget they need to keeping their resources and services going. After all, how can the academic curriculum of the university function without the services that the academic library provides?

When we were discussing the library’s role in Campbell University’s academic curriculum, Scholar said that the dean of the library is a part of the university curriculum counsel. Along with that, she emphasized the point that the library makes sure that a liaison attends as many faculty meetings as possible. The textbook also emphasizes this point as well. As stated by the textbook, “The librarian assigned as the liaison needs to ensure that discussions and decisions by the committee are made known to the other librarians and administrators.”² This is probably the most important responsibility that academic libraries have to stay on top of. They need make sure that they are always aware of what faculty’s plans are for their courses. That way, the library itself can tailor their services and resources to the decisions that the professors make. In fact, academic libraries can’t do what they were designed to do if they aren’t aware of what is going in those faculty meetings, let alone the academic curriculum.

Towards the end of the interview, I asked Scholar if the library plays a part in providing long-distance education to students. The reason why I asked this question is because I myself am an online student. She immediately said that it is a must for the library to work with long-distance education. If they didn’t, then the university would not be accredited, since having some features that support long-distance education is a requirement that universities have to meet. One major way that Scholar and the Wiggins Memorial Library is implementing long-distance education services is through the military. According to her, the library has a liaison that goes to some of the bases to work with military personnel in providing education to those who are unable to get it at the university itself. Ultimately, it seems that long-distance education is going to become increasingly more important as time goes on.

Finally, I ended the interview by asking her if she could give an advice to a future academic librarian, what would that advice be. Her response to this question was to find opportunities to dive into academic operations, as well as get some real-world experience. Experience is not only a great teacher, but also it can also give you things that no textbook or lecture can give you. What I learned from her response to this question is that if you want to go far in not just a career in libraries, but in any career in general as

² Edward G. Evans, Stacy Greenwell and Camila A. Alire, *Academic Librarianship*, 2nd Ed. (Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman, 2018), 90.

well, then you can not wait and hope for opportunities to come knocking at your door. You have to seek them out and capitalize on them. You should always be seeking opportunities throughout your entire career.

That is what I have ultimately learned from this interview assignment. Scholar didn't get to where she is today by just waiting for success to happen. She worked hard, kept stepping out of her comfort zone, and taking advantage of every opportunity that she found. That is something that I myself need to do in order to go far in my future library career. Scholar and the Wiggins Memorial Library are already using these opportunities to further strengthen their relationship with the academic community, which is the key to providing top-quality academic library services. Overall, this interview assignment has taught me that in order to succeed in an academic library career, then I need to constantly get involved in the daily life of the academic institution as a whole.

Works Cited Page

Evans, Edward G., Stacy Greenwell and Camila A. Alire. *Academic Librarianship*, 2nd Ed. Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman, 2018.