Seeking Balance: Professional Development Needs of Tenured Information Science Faculty

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ABSTRACT
There is minimal, mainly anecdotal, evidence of discourse about the professional development of information science (IS) academics. In an effort to initiate discussion on professional development and encourage information sharing among IS faculty and administrators, we organized a panel at the 2016 Annual Meeting of ASIS&T (Lopatovska et al., 2016). The panel brought attention to the professional development resources and strategies available to mid-career faculty, and uncovered the need to continue the discussion. This proposed interactive panel aims to identify tenured IS faculty members’ needs related to their scholarly, teaching and service pursuits, explore professional wellbeing and work climate, share best practices, and brainstorm potential solutions for some of the identified issues. The issues and solutions uncovered during the panel discussion will be shared with the broader community (e.g. through the ASIS&T Bulletin) with the hope that recommendations can be adopted and acted upon by individuals, academic institutions, and professional associations. The panel will be of interest to faculty, doctoral students and academic administrators.

Keywords
Professional development, faculty development, academic career development, information science, library and information science education.

INTRODUCTION
Academia in general, and departments and schools of information science (IS) in particular, face an ever changing climate of multidisciplinarity, increasing diversity of students and their needs, and changes in service demands and institutional cultures (Nicholls, 2014). Not all institutions of higher education offer specialized services to assist faculty to cope with these changes, or to advance their research, teaching and service agendas while maintaining their wellbeing.

Although much emphasis has been placed on the career development and mentorship of pre-tenure faculty, senior (i.e., tenured) faculty also require support. A literature review by Russell (2010) found that increased administrative tasks, workplace inequities, lack of collegiality, poor departmental leadership, workload issues, and lack of autonomy, recognition, and resources to carry out research pursuits are all sources of dissatisfaction amongst senior faculty. These factors generate workplace dissatisfaction and stress that are harmful to individual wellbeing; this stress may be perpetuated by the “publish or perish” culture of academia.

Vera, Salanova and Martín (2010) found that faculty who performed primarily management tasks experienced more incidence of burnout and job dissatisfaction, and had lower workplace engagement than those who spent more time on research. Although Vera et al. (2010) did not distinguish
between tenured and non-tenured faculty, others have found that faculty tend to spend more time on administrative duties post-tenure (Russell, 2010). Yet, faculty burnout affects more than just individual faculty members.

Faculty performance issues related to stress are often tolerated by the academic culture. These dysfunctional attributes, if gone unchecked, and not discussed with the stress victim, can easily become chronic and negatively impact other faculty, staff, students, and program quality (Minter, 2009, p. 1).

Thus, the health of IS programs and their future growth and sustainability are predicated on the balanced of meaningful research, teaching and service contributions of the professoriate.

We found only one recent study on the needs of IS faculty. Hahn and Lester (2012) surveyed Library and Information Science (LIS) and iSchool faculty in the U.S. and Canada and identified significant gaps in the availability and quality of faculty mentorship programs. The study participants identified a number of important areas for their professional development, including teaching and learning, work-life balance, and grant writing and the conduct of research. They also indicated a preference for receiving professional development training in-person (e.g. workshops at conference venues) over digital web-based options. Their study did not extensively explore the availability of resources to address the main areas of professional development, but it recommended a more active role of professional organizations in developing guidelines and workshops for improving professional development options for IS faculty.

In an effort to identify the need for conversations among IS academics about issues related to professional development, we organized a panel at the 2016 ASIS&T Annual Meeting (Lopatovska et al., 2016). While the panel’s aim was to discuss issues of particular interest to mid-career faculty, it attracted participants from all academic ranks and facilitated exchange of information related to career planning, work-life balance, importance of professional networks, strategies for coping with work expectations, management of service demands, the need to reinvent personal research agendas, and other related topics. The panel participants expressed interest in continuing the conversation about their professional development needs and solutions during future ASIS&T Annual Meetings.

The goals of the proposed panel include raising awareness of current issues and concerns of tenured IS faculty, identifying resources that are available and/or used to address some of these concerns, and brainstorming additional tools and strategies that can be developed to address professional needs of IS academics. The expected outcomes include a set of common professional development issues and coping strategies that will be shared with the IS community through the ASIS&T Bulletin or publications of other sister professional associations. This could be used by organizations such as ASIS&T and Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) to explore mentorship and professional development opportunities, and the means through which to fulfill these needs.

**PANEL AGENDA**

The panel aims to explore and facilitate conversations around tenured IS faculty’s main concerns and professional development solutions related to their research, teaching, service, general work environment, and wellbeing. Each panelist will lead a discussion on one of the panel’s themes: research, teaching, service, and work environment/wellbeing.

The proposed structure of the 90-minute panel will include an introduction, identification of the audience’ main professional development needs, and discussion of existing and potential solutions to address these needs.

At the beginning of the session, the panelists will introduce themselves and outline the main discussion themes to the audience [10 minutes].

Next, participants will organize into small discussion groups and will be tasked with identifying issues/questions related to their experiences in the areas of research, teaching, service, general work environment and wellbeing. The issues will be captured on paper and posted to the wall. The color of the paper or ink (red, yellow, and green) will indicate the importance of the identified issues in participants’ professional lives. The panelists will walk around the room to facilitate the discussions and keep the groups on task. [20 minutes]

After the groups finalize discussions of their professional experiences and concerns, the panel organizers will present preliminary thematic analysis of the content of participants’ notes, ask the audience to share similar experiences and describe professional development resources they already use or can develop to address their professional needs. For example, a participant(s) might identify high number of or demanding service activities as being detrimental to their research and teaching. The panelists will share their experiences of balancing the three main areas of an academic’s role and ask the audience members to share their coping strategies. Examples of additional issues may include healthy work environments and tips for dealing with micro-aggressions, stress and burnout, balancing short- and long-term professional goals (e.g. the “quantification imperative” of publishing (Vostal, 2015), finding professional identity in an increasingly multi-disciplinary environment, fostering support for mentoring, developing matrices to measure service contributions, balancing work and personal life, and promoting professional development resources within professional organizations (e.g. ASIS&T). [60 minutes]
The panelists will record the main discussion themes and disseminate their findings to the ASIS&T community through the ASIS&T Bulletin or other publications.

Participants or audience members will also be invited to continue the discussion on Twitter using the hashtags: #WorkLifeBalanceASIS&T2017.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES
The panel aims to generate a discussion of the current needs in professional development of IS faculty and share tools and strategies for addressing these issues. Understanding the needs of IS faculty is the first step in developing support for their professional growth and job satisfaction, which in turn translates into productive research, empowered students, and meaningful service contributions.

The panel will be relevant to ASIS&T as a professional organization because it may inform creation of new services for members in terms of professional development, such as guidelines for publishing and peer-review process, mentorship database or matching service, webinars, and a professional development column in the ASIS&T Bulletin. Identified concerns and means of addressing them might be particularly relevant in light of ASIS&T’s stake in the LIS program accreditation process.

Panelists
Each panelist brings a unique perspective on the issues in professional development based on her/his personal and professional experiences, seniority, and institutional affiliation.

Martina Dragija Ivanović, PhD is an Assistant Professor and Vice-Dean at the University of Zadar, Department of Information Sciences. She obtained her PhD in Information science from Zadar University, Croatia. She is a co-director for the biennial international conference, Libraries in the Digital Age (LIDA), which has been organized since 2000 by Rutgers University (US), Zadar University and Osijek University (Croatia). She is working with the European Network for Work Information (ENWI) group on investigations of workplace information. Her teaching and research interests include evaluation of information services, research methods and, in particular, qualitative methods and the role of public and university libraries in information society.

Heidi Julien, PhD is a Professor and Chair at the Department of Library and Information Studies in the Graduate School of Education, University at Buffalo. Her research focuses on information behavior and digital literacy. She is President-Elect of the Association for Library and Information Science Education. She served as President of the Canadian Association for Information Science, and as Chair of the ASIS&T Special Interest Group Information Seeking and Use (SIGUSE). She also serves on the Permanent Committee for ISIC: the information behavior conference.

Abebe Rorissa is an Associate Professor in the Department of Information Science, University at Albany. Prior to his current position, he worked in four countries as a lecturer and systems librarian for 17 years. He has consulted for academic institutions, national governments, and international organizations, including the United Nations. His research interests include multimedia information organization and retrieval, scaling of users’ information needs/perceptions, and use/acceptance/adoption and impact of information and communication technologies. Dr. Rorissa is a Member-at-Large on the ASIS&T Board of Directors.

Organizers
Irene Lopatovska is an Associate Professor at the Pratt Institute School of Information, where she has worked in various positions for ten years. Dr. Lopatovska graduated from Rutgers University in 2009 with a Ph.D. in Information Science and her research interests include the role of emotion in the information interaction context; human information behavior; and research methods. She is currently a Student Chapter Representative at ASIS&T.

Heather O’Brien is an Associate Professor at the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. She earned her PhD at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada in 2008. Dr. O’Brien’s research focuses on user engagement with digital information environments, specifically the conceptual nature of engagement and its evaluation. She is currently a Member-at-Large for the ASIS&T Board of Directors and Chair of the Special Interest Group Information Seeking and Use (SIGUSE).

REFERENCES


