

Degrading Professional Librarian Status at Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi, 2007-2015 — a policy history

by Thomas H. Kreneck

“When we remain silent, we participate in our own marginalization.”
Wendy Davis, Austin 1/21/2017

From December 1, 1990 through August 31, 2012, I served as head of Special Collections & Archives at the Mary and Jeff Bell Library of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. During my almost twenty-two-year tenure in that position and through the efforts of a diligent staff, the department made some stellar achievements for the benefit of the students of A&M-Corpus Christi and elsewhere, scholarship in general, and the larger community’s historical consciousness by documenting the development and culture of the region it served. Some of the more interesting of these contributions have been chronicled in the professional and popular literature.¹

While these experiences were positive, during the final two years of my service in that position (2010-2012), I was a witness to, participant in, and (along with the rest of the library professionals) a victim of deliberate degrading of professional librarian employment status. Unfortunately, such degradation of librarian and other academic professional status has become a trend in academia. What we as a class of A&M-Corpus Christi employees experienced during those two years constituted a case study of the downgrading of professional librarians from “good cause” employees to “at will” employees by the Texas A&M University System and A&M-Corpus Christi. This process ran counter to progressive thought and activity, which has always focused on the condition of employees in general and librarians in particular.

A native of South Texas, Thomas H. Kreneck holds a Ph.D. in history from Bowling Green State University. He served as an archivist at the Houston Metropolitan Research Center (1976-1990) and as head of Special Collections & Archives at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (1990-2012). Author of books and articles, Kreneck specialized in documenting the Mexican American experience.

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The present downgrading of librarian status academy-wide usually takes the form of losing faculty status and has caught the attention of those reporting on the condition of librarians. As a variation, the A&M-Corpus Christi librarians lost “academic status,” an alternate form of professional rank which allows for academic freedom and job security. Furthermore, A&M-Corpus Christi did not “grandfather” those of us who had achieved off-probationary status, a condition earned after serving a five-year probationary period which had conferred a vested right to our jobs and had allowed for continuing renewal of annual employment. Thus, this essay does not deal with the long-debated issues of faculty versus non-faculty status. It deals with basic rights granted to professionals who had earned rights through laboriously following the stated policy under which they were hired and then having those rights summarily and retroactively stripped from them, much as property is taken.²

Incredibly, too, although the librarians learned of their degraded employment status in 2010, the downgrading had actually taken place in 2007. The librarians had not been notified of their misfortune by the university administration for approximately three years. Lamentably, too, after the initial struggles of 2010-2012 which I observed firsthand before I left A&M-Corpus Christi, the librarians worked to formulate a new policy which was formally adopted in late 2015. While this new policy contained elements which were designed to make it palatable to some of the professional librarians, it provided them with terminal one-to-three-year contracts. Thus, this new policy in effect codified the downgrading of their employment status begun in 2007.

The purpose of this essay is to present a policy history which places into the professional literature this entire episode (2007-2015) and thus augments knowledge on the topic. By doing so, professionals can understand what happened to a specific group of librarians from the perspective of one who went through its most intense phase as well as sought to understand its details and implications through subsequent research. This essay might then be used as an example of what has transpired and is transpiring throughout the profession. Perhaps it can also help to serve as a practical roadmap for what professionals might look for and guard against. Hopefully, too, this essay will encourage professional librarians in other institutions to document similar experiences which they have undergone. In accomplishing the above purposes, what the library professionals at A&M-Corpus Christi endured as a class of academic employees will not have been entirely in vain.

Perhaps over-optimistically, I hope that the trend toward de-professionalism of librarians, as evidenced by the case at A&M-Corpus Christi, is but a phase, and that through concerted effort conditions might be righted for the betterment of the profession, education, and society in general. Thus, I place my faith in progressive values and the rectification of the negative atmosphere which prevails.

My methodology is that of the first-person participant observer who seeks to narrate the facts as I saw them to be. As such I interpret the particulars from the view of the insider. This perspective provides an intimacy with the situation that a third party can never possess. My training as a professional historian, an appropriate passage of time since the events occurred, as well as gathering further data through interviews and other documents and open records research furnish a heightened degree of balance, objectivity and information. Furthermore, I hold my judgments regarding how others felt and/or their motivations to a minimum and provide them only when totally convinced by documentary evidence, multiple observations and interviews, and/or interactions with those individuals firsthand. In this manner, what I present might allow readers, especially professional librarians, to draw their own conclusions.

My approach also includes providing anonymity to persons I interviewed, quoted, or cited for this essay. My research deals with sensitive matters for many involved, and as journalists often do, such efforts by necessity must shield some people's identity. Although many individuals willingly divulged their insights and factual information, for a variety of understandable reasons, they asked that I withhold their names. These reasons ranged from mere personal privacy to the need to pursue the rest of their careers without fear of future unfair or retributive job references. Some simply wanted to put these unpleasant experiences behind them and could best do so by not revealing their identity in print.

Except for those persons who were involved in the development of librarian employment status at A&M-Corpus Christi before the degradation started, I do not identify by name those individuals who held positions and took certain actions in the 2007-2015 process. While personalities play roles, it is the actions of those involved which need to be scrutinized without revealing individual names. Often times, too, it is impossible to determine what specific person(s) within the system or university administrations made the decisions which impacted the events. In such cases, it is enough to identify the action as a system or university. It is the process itself of the degradation of professional librarian employment at A&M-Corpus Christi that is important to identify and explain. Naturally, I mean no ill will or bad intentions toward any individual.

The Events: Academic Status, 1990-2009

On March 29, 1990, A&M-Corpus Christi (then Corpus Christi State University) issued (i.e. formally adopted) its employment policy for professional librarians as university policy section 2.2.10 (later renumbered 2.3). Entitled "Employment, Responsibilities, and Evaluation of Professional Librarians," this university policy identified professional librarians as a "distinct group of academic employees" with "special skills, knowledge and experience...."³

Almost six pages in length, university policy 2.2.10 (2.3) constituted a form of what professional librarians commonly term “academic status” and it closely paralleled the terms of employment given to tenure track teaching faculty. Policy 2.2.10 (2.3) called for a period of probation “which shall not exceed seven years of full time service” at the institution. In each of the first four years the librarian was carefully evaluated on a lengthy list of criteria. “During the fifth complete year of employment..., a librarian comes under consideration for the formal closing of his or her probationary period.” Within that fifth year a librarian came under “a review of more than ordinary scope.” After this review period, the professional librarian was no longer on probation and could thereafter only be terminated “for good cause.” Important as well, the policy stated that “the burden of proof of good cause rest[ed] with the institution” for issuing “dismissals or terminal contracts....” This process paralleled that of faculty, as the policy called for the professional librarians’ membership in the faculty senate, service on university committees, attendance at graduation ceremony, and other faculty duties.⁴

Though university policy section 2.2.10 (2.3) had shortcomings (mainly, it lacked rankings and promotions), it provided a fair, professional employment framework. The policy listed seven (7) “good cause” motives for dismissal that included “professional incompetence,” “moral turpitude,” “bona fide financial exigency,” and other reasonable, commonly accepted reasons. Furthermore, the policy provided that in the “dismissal of a non-probationary librarian, a *bona fide* effort should be made to achieve a satisfactory resolution of difficulties....”⁵ Otherwise, in practice, after the end of the probationary period the annual appointment letter would be automatically issued (called “continuing appointment” and “continuing employment” by the Association of College & Research Libraries).⁶

From March 29, 1990 forward, the university hired professional librarians under the above-mentioned policy and abided by its recognized guidelines. Upon reaching their fifth year of employment, they each went through the process of going off probation which included preparing a lengthy packet for review by a committee and the library director; their formal recommendation for the closing of the probationary status to the provost/vice president for academic affairs (i.e. the chief academic officer in the university); and the formal closing of that status by the provost. At that point, the librarian had earned a vested right to his/her job.

After that onerous process, the librarian worked under continuing appointment, with his/her letters of appointment automatically issued on an annual basis. Using myself as an example of the process, I was hired under 2.2.10 (2.3). At the time of my hiring as head of Special Collections & Archives in late 1990, then library director Richard L. O’Keeffe explained this policy to me in great detail, as it had recently been adopted. O’Keeffe was justifiably proud of this policy because he had played an important part in its formulation. The policy played a major role in my accepting the position as it offered a level of academic freedom, job

security, and professional stature paralleling faculty. Having come from a professional position at the Houston Public Library which offered civil service protection, I would not have taken the job at A&M-Corpus Christi without policy 2.2.10 (2.3) in place. Even at that early date in my career I had no desire to be an employee that served by annual appointment which made one susceptible to the unbridled pleasure of an administrator.

In 1994-1995, I underwent this process of going off probation after having been on probation for four years, submitting my substantial packet of materials to then library director Benjamin Wakashige, and being intensely evaluated. Based on the library director's recommendation, I was formally taken off probation by the signature of provost/vice president of academic affairs Tito Guerrero on December 7, 1995, thus earning a vested interest (aka vested right or property right) to my job in accordance with university policy. I felt justifiably proud of having gained this off-probation status and had no doubt that the university would henceforth recognize that achievement. From that time forward, I worked under continuing appointment, with my letter of appointment, signed by the library director, issued annually.⁷

The university further verified our status under continuing appointment to me when in January 2001, a subsequent A&M-Corpus Christi library director as well as a subsequent provost/vice president for academic affairs asked me to write a letter of recommendation to the latter granting "the status of continuing appointment" to the incumbent library director. Believing the incumbent should receive this status, I quickly complied.⁸

Thereafter, I continued to serve the university as the head of special collections and archives and in other ways and was designated associate (library) director of special collections and archives in 2001, one of three associate directors in the Bell Library. My credibility was perhaps best recognized in 2006-2007 by receiving the first Excellence in Librarianship Award bestowed by the A&M-Corpus Christi faculty senate. By 2010, I had become the senior professional librarian and senior associate director in terms of length of service.

Between 1995 and 2008, other professional librarians on staff went through the identical off-probationary process outlined in policy 2.2.10 (2.3). I was aware of approximately six others who followed me in attaining this status. Each put forward their packets, her/his work was intensively reviewed, and earned continuing appointment after five years of productive employment.

From 1990 to 2010, the A&M-Corpus Christi librarians took seriously their employment status. Often, they raised the issue of gaining faculty status and/or trying to codify a system of rankings and promotions within Policy 2.2.10 (2.3). This focus on vested rights resembled the concerns of professional librarians in many other places, just as teaching faculty felt about tenure.

The Events: August 23, 2010-Early 2011

However, in 2010 and along with the other approximately ten members of the professional library staff (including the five above-noted, off-probation individuals), I received an unpleasant, perplexing surprise. Signed as usual by the library director, my annual appointment letter dated August 23, 2010, varied from previous letters of appointment by adding two sentences which stated “This notice of appointment is not a guarantee of employment for any specified length of time. Per [Texas A&M University] System Policy 32.02, non-faculty appointments are ‘at will,’ which means that the University may terminate the non-faculty appointment, with or without cause.” Like the other Bell Library professionals, I had no warning or expectation that such was to happen and naturally was dismayed, especially by the harshness of the newly-added final two sentences.⁹

Under normal circumstances, as I approached my twentieth anniversary of service in the Bell Library, I would have felt a sense of satisfaction at having achieved such a milestone. Instead, my time at A&M-Corpus Christi would thenceforth be marked by feelings of confusion, frustration, betrayal, disrespect, and an acutely stressful work environment.

Several of the other librarians (with whom I immediately spoke directly about the situation) and I were also verbally, individually, and informally told that this system-wide policy superseded local university policy. However, we were never issued any written directive officially stating or explaining this situation. Previous to this 2010 appointment letter, to my knowledge the professional librarians had never been notified or apprised of System Policy 32.02 or any of its revisions, much less that this system policy conflicted with the employment status of professional librarians in any manner.

Upon receiving the August 23, 2010 “at will” letter, another senior member of the library professional staff and I immediately asked the library director for a group meeting and formal explanation of this situation, but we were not granted such a meeting. Instead, the library director told me that she would meet with professional librarians who had questions on an individual basis. Thus, I would only know what she told me and others who chose to confide in me.

Several of us also immediately checked the Faculty and Staff Handbook both in hardcopy and online and found that section 2.3 (formerly 2.2.10) “Employment, Responsibilities, and Evaluation of Professional Librarians” was present. We also checked system policy and found that 32.02 was likewise there. A sentence stating “The rule is being revised” had been added to policy 2.3.¹⁰ (Subsequent open records research revealed that this sentence first appeared in the 1994 Handbook.) I surmise that sentence had been added during the 1990s when the professional librarians had advocated for rankings and promotions be added to our policy.¹¹

At first I thought the August 23, 2010 appointment letter had an easy remedy in favor of those who had been hired under university policy 2.3, or at least for those of us who had gone through the five-year review. Usually, even under the worst of situations regarding a change in professional status, such “grandfathering” was the norm. As events unfolded, my initial thoughts proved erroneous.

From the start, I felt puzzled by what seemed to me the incumbent library director’s non-engaged posture regarding the issue, especially since it involved her entire body of professional librarians (and herself) apparently having lost academic, “good cause” status. Having been summarily appointed to the position in 2003, she was the fourth library director under whom I had served since 1990, and she was a knowledgeable individual. Indeed, so capable in the eyes of the administration that we had learned at the August 17, 2010 library staff meeting that as of September 1, she would be elevated to assistant vice president – in addition to holding her title as library director. When I had received my appointment letter directly from her in her office in late August, 2010, she had not pointed out the addition of those two disconcerting sentences. I had even opened the letter in her presence and gave it a cursory reading (mainly to check for a salary increase), and thanked her for my annual appointment.

When I had returned to my office, a fellow senior librarian telephoned to urge me to read the letter carefully to note this “at will” statement at the bottom of the document. I immediately returned to the soon-to-be AVP/library director’s office to inquire about why these sentences had been added. The director told me that she had no knowledge of the situation other than what was stated in our 2010 appointment letter.

The rank and file professional librarians quickly tried to organize a unified reaction to this situation, but we were unsuccessful in even constructing proper language for a statement to the administration that we could agree upon. We all expressed concern about this new language in our appointment letters. However, differing personalities, disagreements regarding the correct approach, fear for one’s job, intrinsic problems of unifying white-collar professionals, and doubtless other unspoken motives, prevented us from organizing a stiff resistance. This disunity from the start, in addition to what I soon began to see as a lack of support/leadership from the administration, played a fundamental role, I believe, in a doomed outcome.

My own position was firm and I expressed it numerous times. Reflecting on my notations of a September 30, 2010 meeting strictly among the professional librarians, I stressed to our two library representatives on the faculty senate that the administration should rectify the situation of the professional librarians’ status as “good cause” employees and support our longtime policy 2.3. This meant that the administration should at least try to have our policy re-validated by the A&M University System. I felt overwhelmed that my employment policy had somehow been abrogated.¹²

On October 7, 2010, six weeks after our appointment letters had been issued and much worry on our part, the library's representatives to the faculty senate informed the professional librarians that the AVP/library director and the speaker of the faculty senate finally spoke to the then interim provost about our "at will" letters. Our senator directly handling this issue advocated for our position admirably, though she was still in her probationary period. She gave us an optimistic report that while the interim provost had not been aware of the language, he did not feel that the "at will" language should have been included. Our senator also noted that she felt "we're on the right track."¹³

Through open records research I conducted much later for this essay, I learned that the harshness of the wording on the employment letter and the employment status of professional librarians finally became a topic for open discussion at the regular president's cabinet (PC) meeting on October 11, 2010. The PC consisted of the university president, his four vice presidents, a couple of attachés, and usually some lower level administrators making reports. This particular PC meeting included ten people, meaning that the issue would be known more widely. While the PC seemed to lament the "aggressiveness of the language" in the letters, they "agreed that the status of non-faculty employees does need to be understood, but the language of the letter should be reviewed." They noted among themselves that "Librarians go through a process, established in a 1990 rule and not reviewed since." Furthermore, and unknown to the professional librarians, "[a] policy [was] under review that provide[d] for ranks for librarians." They also noted that "[t]he 1990 rule and the one under development need to be reviewed together." The interim provost was to "follow up" on this matter. "It was also agreed that the annual salary letters for librarians...should come from the Provost's Office rather than Human Resources."¹⁴

The AVP/library director communicated to us on October 12, that "our appointment letters were discussed in President's Cabinet yesterday and it was decided that henceforth our letters will be issued by the Provost's office along with faculty letters, rather than by HR." While her abbreviated reporting of the PC discussion could be read with some optimism, it was still unclear how this change addressed our concerns or altered our employment status.¹⁵

We librarians tried to take a degree of encouragement from what had transpired, and I voiced as much positive support to the AVP/library director as I could. Our faculty senator handling this issue had said the interim provost was sympathetic to our cause. Also, in answer to my direct query of the AVP/library director if "a correction will be made in our current letters of appointment that have the 'at will' clause," the AVP/library director informed me that it was "still unknown at this time whether they will correct our current letters" but noted that she was working with the university president and the interim provost "to more clearly define our status based on current system policy and to everyone's satisfaction." She

also stated that she would “be calling a meeting of the librarians soon to go over things” and that the interim provost was “definitely working toward a resolution in our favor.”¹⁶

Still, I (and others) were more than uneasy about this situation. Such “a meeting of the librarians,” I felt, should have come at least a month before with full disclosure. I again emailed the AVP/library director that “I feel as if I am in a nightmare situation” and hoped that “no one is contemplating trying to deny me the conditions under which I was hired and have been employed these last twenty years.” I likewise stressed that being “at will” would deny me the right to academic freedom.¹⁷

Several days passed when we received what I saw as ambivalent news from our lead faculty senator on the results of the October 15 meeting of the faculty senate. On the one hand, she reported “palpable support from senators,” lengthy discussion of our situation, that our letters of appointment would be re-issued, and that the “at will” clause would be removed. On the other hand, “there will be a statement indicating that we are here at the discretion of the President, which caused some concern among those present.” She also noted that the interim provost “mentioned the need for an updated ‘definition’ of librarians in University Policy” with our status being “decided with librarian input.”¹⁸

In response, I emailed our faculty senator, and copied in all the professional librarians including the AVP/library director, that “[h]aving not been part of any process of discussion on our status other than with my fellow professionals” to this point, “I was unclear about the part about us being here ‘at the discretion of the president.’ That sounds as if it is an ‘at will’ phrase, just put another way.” I concluded that “it sounds to me as if my ‘just cause’ protection of the policy under which I have been working for twenty years has been ignored.” I concluded by asking everyone: “Am I incorrect in this? Would someone have the decency to tell me?” Surely, almost two months of not being privy in a significant manner to my status and future called for some understanding and sensitivity regarding the issue at hand.¹⁹

On October 21, the interim provost communicated to the professional librarians via email (through the AVP/library director) about “what we are doing to clarify the status of and career path for librarians at the university.” He noted that librarians were “a special group of professionals who, while not faculty, are central to the academic enterprise of the university.” The library, he continued “ha[d] been directed to develop a new classification and ranking system for librarians.” He repeated that our letters of appointment would “originate from the office of the provost.” We would, however, receive “continuance letters” from Human Resources. Of course, he thanked us for our “valued” service.²⁰

While I tried to put the best face on this communication and thanked the AVP/library director and (through her) the interim provost for their

efforts, I continued to express my serious concerns about the drift toward something that varied from our previous academic status and its possible negative repercussions on our employment.²¹

I soon had what I guess was supposed to be the administration's answer to "my concerns" and oddly it did not come from the AVP/library director who was my direct supervisor. After all my expressions of concern as well as those from other professional librarians about this matter (mainly through emails with one another), I alone was summoned to the office of the interim provost for a meeting on October 22, 2010.

This summons surprised me because I had only seen the interim provost and did not know him. Indeed, it was difficult to develop any significant familiarity with the occupant of the Provost's Office at any particular time at our university in those years because the position was commonly termed on A&M-Corpus Christi campus as a "revolving door," much complicating the situation for the professional librarians and their status. By the time I was contacted by the interim provost in late October 2010, two previous permanent provosts had been hired and removed and replaced by interims between August 15, 2006 and April 20, 2010, making occupancy or continuity in this important office extremely unstable and, as shall be further noted, detrimental to the professional librarians and knowledge of their status.²²

This meeting with the interim provost shook my momentary, tenuous optimism. Even the invitation to this October 22 meeting was confusing and disheartening. The interim provost's administrative assistant had telephoned me for this meeting without telling me what it was about. After I asked her what the topic of the meeting was to be, she had to call the interim provost and then call me back to let me know it was about my "concerns." At the time I could only assume my "concerns" had to do with the employment status of librarians. I had no idea who had told the interim provost I had "concerns" or who determined that he should call me to a private meeting.

The interim provost was an outwardly courteous, retired education dean from another university who the incumbent A&M-Corpus Christi president often called upon for interim duty. Thus, I could assume that he had the president's trust, spoke for him, and could be relied on for understanding our current status.

When I met with the interim provost he began by saying that he had just come from the university president's office where the president had told him that "he [the president] would not let me [the interim provost] fire you [Kreneck], even if I [the interim provost] wanted to." I supposed that this was an "old boy" attempt to assuage "my concerns," but it inwardly aggravated me. At age 62 and with my advanced credentials, I had come to this meeting to talk about professional librarian employment *policy* and the vested right we had earned in our positions, not to be the recipient of what I perceived as individualized paternalistic treatment.²³

At the meeting, the interim provost indicated that the administration was aware of the contradiction in policies, and he dismissed my attempts to put forward my argument for my off-probationary vested status under 2.3. He made it clear to me that the university administration considered that our academic vested right was null and void.

On the other hand, when I expressed my concerns about having my academic freedom protected by formal policy, the interim provost assured me that we were still protected by the same guarantees as before. This statement, of course, made no sense to me. He heightened my frustrations when he noted that we would have no problems if we just kept doing our jobs. His demeanor was dismissive and his body language indicated to me that our library work to him was diminutive in nature and that he had little idea of what professional information managers actually did.

Nor did the interim provost indicate any firm understanding of the future status of professional librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi as I had been led to believe by previous communications. He tried in vain to explain a new contract type employment that, apparently, they envisioned for us, but floundered in reading an online version of the document. He noted, however, that the AVP/library director would produce a draft of the new policies and procedures for librarians within a couple of days.

At the time, we librarians had been told that an “amended” letter of appointment was to be issued to us. When I asked the interim provost if the language stating that we would “be employed at the discretion of the president” (i.e. “at will”) would be retained in that forthcoming letter, he opined that it “probably would be.” His last statement gave me much discomfort.

Knowing that this interim provost would soon be replaced by yet another permanent provost (a search was in process), I made no further remonstrance, hoping that a new provost would be more understanding of our situation as professionals. I left the interim provost’s office, however, baffled and frustrated, having at best received what I regarded as contradictory information, except that the administration considered that our status under policy 2.3 was null and void, and disheartening indications that the interim provost knew little to nothing about professional librarianship and its past and future status on campus.

Regardless of what the interim provost had told me, three days later (on October 25, 2010), the university issued to each of us an “AMENDED” letter of appointment which excluded the “at will” and “without cause” sentences. Nor did it contain the phrase “at the will of the president.”

Indeed confusing, our amended letter held the exact wording as those that predated the 2010 “at will” letter. As usual, my letter of appointment simply stated that our employment was “subject to the Regulations of the Texas A&M University system.” Since we had received no official explanation,

I had no idea whether this statement remained as a *pro forma* inclusion or whether it was an attempt by the university to shift any further onus on to the System without directly stating we were “at will.” (The only difference from the standard, previous letters was that the director now signed it as “Assistant Vice President and Director, Mary and Jeff Bell Library,” the AVP title which had been bestowed as of September 1.)²⁴

Adding to the confusion, during the fall 2010 episode over the initial “at will” letter of appointment, two of our professional librarians actually underwent their intensive five-year review as per university policy 2.3. As a senior off-probation librarian, I served on the library committee to review their packets. We unanimously recommended that the two merited being taken off probation. One of these librarians later informed me that he was notified that he was declared off probation. This action led me to hope that our policy 2.3 was somehow in effect. Otherwise, it was inexplicable why the administration put these people through this process. The one off-probation letter I saw (much later in preparation for writing this essay) from the interim provost to the university president dated February 11, 2011, was entitled “Continuing Appointment of [the librarian in question].” It stated, however, that “in accordance with our current policy 2.3,” the librarian should be granted “Continued Appointment.” This letter was checked as “Approved” and initialed by the president himself. In the administration’s mind, did “continued” mean something different than “continuing?” Was it a clever obfuscation by use of a different word or simply clumsy prose? Regardless, still left without an explanation in late 2010 (and early 2011), this action regarding the two librarians increased the degree of uncertainty among the professionals.²⁵

Also, another professional librarian was hired in December 2010, with policy 2.3 posted (after the “at will” letter appeared), just as I had been hired under it twenty years before, absurdly in contrast to what we were being told was our true status.²⁶ For me, this latter hire seemed to be done under false pretenses by the university, which I mentioned to the librarian in question. She told me a few days later that she and her spouse did not feel they could afford the costs of an attorney. Such a response underscored, in my opinion at that time, the vulnerability of the professional librarians.

Of greatest importance, policy 2.3 remained on the university’s online “Faculty Handbook” and in the print copy of the Faculty Handbook that was in the bookcase in the library staff lounge, which held other official library and university documents for staff reference. This Faculty Handbook was the document we had always been led to believe was in effect.

As one can imagine, by the end of 2010, I (and others within the rank and file professional staff) felt harassed and adrift in regard to our status and employment policy, and more confusion and harassment would follow.

Through our two faculty senators (both of whom were still within their five-year probationary period), we continued to press our case to the

faculty senate in a vain attempt for resolution. At first, as noted above, many members of the faculty senate seemed concerned with our situation, but I sensed a waning of that interest or urgency about the matter. As time progressed, I observed that the teaching faculty, which made up the majority of the senators, were more concerned about the issues pertaining to their own material conditions rather than trying to understand, much less appreciate, the academic status of professional librarians, a common condition doubtless faced by many professional librarians. I even had to correct the speaker of the faculty senate at one senate meeting that what governed librarian employment was “policy” rather than “practice,” when he tried to explain our status. In all candor, when I repeatedly engaged the teaching faculty senators and the speaker, I began to feel as if they distanced themselves from the issue and that my comments fell on deaf ears. I remember remarking to one of the other affected librarians that if the teaching faculty members’ vested status (i.e. tenure) had been summarily stripped from them they would be in rebellion across campus. Teaching faculty, even my closest associates, for whatever reason, simply would not or did not put themselves in our shoes.

In late 2010, the AVP/library director presented us with the draft of a new policy which seemed aimed to push professional librarians into a “contract” status. While I read the document and had input into revising it, the implications of being a “contract” employee were unclear, especially in regard to system policy. It appeared to be a new and untried policy and we were the guinea pigs in its implementation. Even though I was an associate director, I never had a full and systematic explanation of the implications of this “contract” status, as well as a full and systematic explanation – i.e. by whom, how, and when – our current policy was supposedly abrogated. I was told that this new contract policy had been adopted by another A&M system campus. However, when I personally telephoned the director of that library, he told me they had not done so and indeed quizzed me with concerns he had about the policy.

The professional librarians and the AVP/library director had several meetings dealing with this new proposed contract policy in late 2010-early 2011, and seemed to be making progress (i.e. we were able to include a form of continuing appointment into the draft). Those meetings discontinued, however, before the proposed document was completed for reasons unknown to me.²⁷

It was, however, during one of these meetings on the new proposed contract policy that the AVP/library director mentioned in my presence that our status problems had been brought about by the incumbent A&M system chancellor and his wishes regarding librarian status. Our AVP/library director made reference to a problem with a librarian at another campus receiving “undeserved” tenure. This comment made no sense to me and I called it into question, but I (and the others present) received no further explanation, except that it was the will of the chancellor. Nevertheless, the AVP/library director’s comment piqued my curiosity that something

had transpired I did not know and would prompt me soon to explore this subject more fully.

Wondering about the fairness or desire to communicate openly with us on the part of the university administration, in early March, 2011, I personally contacted the head of A&M-Corpus Christi's Human Resources (HR) and asked about the system policy on "contract" employees. The HR head emailed me on March 7, stating that she was "not aware of any system regulation or University rule about putting employees on 'contract.'" She further noted that she believed "the issue is whether or not librarians serve 'at will' or ... do they have a 'property right' to their job and thus can only be terminated for cause."²⁸

While I firmly held that I had earned a property right to my job, I marveled that even the head of HR knew nothing about moving employees to "contract" status and that our vested status was still an open question, further creating a sense of uneasiness and confusion with conditions of my employment and the trustworthiness of the university.

When the new permanent provost arrived in early 2011, he demonstrated, at least to my disappointment, little concern about rectifying librarian status. He met with the professional librarians collectively regarding general matters in late March, 2011. Though he was pleasant in his demeanor, toward the end of this meeting I raised the issue of librarian status by stating forthrightly that people had gone back on their word to us. He responded that luckily he had not had to deal with such issues where he had worked previously since the librarians there had faculty status. My comments ended there from want of a follow-up by any of the other librarians present. I (and others) sensed that this new provost had no interest in exploring the issue of our vested status under policy 2.3.

The reticence of younger professionals to confront this issue was understandable. Some were still in their five-year probationary period, such as both of our faculty senators. Others, even those who had off-probation status were in stages of their career where they could ill afford to confront situations like this one and risk retaliation or mediocre references in the future. Less understandable, were those who simply "did not want to get involved" or identified with decisions of the administration for whatever reasons.

Being in my early sixties in 2010, I had more to lose than most of the others. While I shared many of the same fears and confusion as my colleagues, I had been vested longer than the others, prized my professional employment status greatly, and because of age discrimination had no place realistically to go if I wanted to pursue similar employment at this stage in my life. I tried to persevere and certainly wanted to work longer. However, I felt deeply aggrieved by the breach of faith, principle, and contract by the system and university as well as intense frustration by being kept in the dark and given contradictory messages. I felt a sense of disrespect and betrayal by an

institution whose principle purpose was to develop the life of the mind and search for truth. Being a young man during the 1960s-1970s civil rights movements, having taken an active role in the Central American Solidarity movement during the 1980s, and as a progressive I understood the general attack on workers' rights throughout Texas and nation transpiring during these events. Perhaps, too, I am more stalwart at speaking truth to power, while others remain silent in the face of authority.

The Events: Researching the Librarians' "at will" Status, 2011

As I had received no explanation about system policy 32.02, in early 2011, I personally researched that policy since it seemed to be at the root of our predicament. To my amazement, I discovered that this policy had been changed in 2007, abrogating the A&M-Corpus Christi university librarian status policy and that contrary to standard practice, the university administration had not notified the rank and file professional librarians of such an important change in our employment status for this extended period. Thus, the librarians had been "at will" for three years without their knowledge. This discovery gave rise to even further chagrin among some librarians and caused me to lose all faith in the university administration.

Through research of the policy's revisions, I soon found that A&M University's system policy 32.02 had two parts which had been initially approved in February 1995 and November 1997, respectively. Since then, the policy had been periodically revised. I also learned that it was only with the September 28, 2007 Revision that system policy 32.02/32.02.02 flatly declared all non-faculty employees "at will." Prior to that, the Policy had spoken mainly of non-faculty employee probationary status, good cause dismissal, and progressive procedure dismissal, which were generally consistent with the librarian employment policy 2.3. The 2007 revision was recommended to the A&M Board of Regents by the chancellor on August 31, and was formally approved by a unanimous vote of the regents at their September 27-28 meeting. Mention of a probationary period was stricken in the revised policy. This revision clearly represented a watershed in employee status that no one in authority, especially longtime administrators who dealt with probationary periods, would likely miss.²⁹

My verbal telephone inquiries at the system level and with select campus administrators likewise revealed that the A&M System placed this revision in the system policy manual immediately upon approval, had communicated this September 28, 2007 revision to the university's provost office and that this change would have been communicated to the major unit heads, i.e. the deans, project managers, library director, etc., especially if it impacted their units.³⁰

In addition, such revisions would have been quickly entered into the general print and online system policy manual for Texas A&M University campuses. Through my verbal investigation, I was told that even when

the A&M-Corpus Christi's provost's office was vacant, such duties as disseminating policy changes were divided among other provost office administrators so that the various unit heads received system policy changes.³¹

On October 1, 2007, a new provost (the second of the two aforementioned short term people to hold that position), assumed that office at A&M-Corpus Christi, just after the system made its crucial revision to policy 32.02/32.02.02. (and he would serve until April 20, 2010). Though I knew him to be an honorable, intelligent individual, this new provost who took office so soon after the policy change could hardly have been expected to be conversant on the nuanced employment policy of the professional librarians.

The other key university administrators who could have come into play on this issue, however, were long time employees and I believe could have been expected to know both the status of the A&M-Corpus Christi librarians and the important change in system policy 32.02. These officials included the head of the university Human Resources Office (HR), the head of the University Equal Opportunity/Employee Relations Office, the library director, the System Attorney assigned to A&M-Corpus Christi and perhaps others. Indeed, a case for going off-probation by another one of the professional librarians was initiated in December 2007, became rather contested, and had apparently made its way to the office of the System Attorney. (A person of merit, the librarian in question eventually achieved off-probationary status. I served on the committee to evaluate her credentials and followed her situation as closely as I could.) While the new provost could be given a pass on this issue, it seems difficult to believe that the other above-mentioned offices did not know of the September 28, 2007 revision and its inherent contradiction with university policy toward librarians or communicate with one another about this situation, since the reconciliation of system and university policies forms part of their activities, especially as events unfolded in the controversy surrounding the off-probationary status of this particular librarian in the post December 2007 period.³²

Awareness of the problem among A&M-Corpus Christi administrators who dealt with library matters might have been heightened by the A&M System's climate against professional librarian status impacting other A&M campuses by 2008. While a detailed recitation of the situation and its exact sequence of events at these other system libraries are not within the scope of this essay, according to my later interviews with numerous professional librarians, a pattern of questioning librarians' vested status arose, which they felt emanated from the chancellor's office.

The professional librarians at Texas A&M University-College Station (the flagship campus), Texas A&M University-Kingsville (TAMU-K) James J. Jernigan Library, and the Sue and Radcliffe Killam Library at Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) had all long held faculty status.

According to my reliable sources at these schools during my preparing this essay, however, beginning no later than 2008, their faculty status all came under question, reportedly by the chancellor. Though a complex story, the College Station librarians successfully retained their faculty status model, but future faculty status for librarians at the latter campuses was abrogated or in practice suspended. But librarians with tenure at these two branch campuses were grandfathered.³³ These latter two South Texas campuses are in close proximity to A&M-Corpus Christi, giving their situation particular salience to A&M-Corpus Christi.

The many past and present librarians at the three above-mentioned campuses with whom I spoke for this essay (several of them library directors) firmly believe that a system-wide “attack” took place on the vested status of professional librarians, and they were aware of it at the time through their library directors and other administrators. According to library directors in these system schools at the time with whom I conversed, alarm at this state of affairs was even expressed and intensely discussed at one of the regular meetings (ca. 2008-2009) among the A&M University library directors which took place at the bi-annual sessions of the Texas Library Association.³⁴

Although select campuses and the library directors were aware of the system’s questioning of librarian employment status, we professional librarians at the Bell Library (at least my closest colleagues and I) were not collectively cognizant of the issue. We remained isolated in more ways than one. Lamentably, the rank and file professionals in the various A&M campuses failed to share information adequately with other campuses about what was happening at their schools, which proved to be a weakness. Most of the librarians I contacted at these other campuses during the writing of this essay knew nothing of our later problems, though many were not surprised. Equally unfortunate, we librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi had no regular meetings of just the professionals so that such issues might be raised about what they had heard as individuals, and informal communication was not what it should have been. A&M-Corpus Christi library general staff meetings included professionals and paraprofessionals, were lightweight at best, and confined mainly to Bell Library issues. Each of us as professionals was mainly concerned with our own areas of departmental activity, as it proved, much to our peril. Besides, we did not have faculty status, but rather academic status, so in the absence of outside information there seemed no cause for alarm as we trusted our university and felt we were secure with our own policy. In hindsight, having such trust was our mistake, but we (at least my closest colleagues and I) were given no warning from the library or university administration prior to late August 2010, to suggest that our employment status was in danger.

Essentially in the dark for three years, the A&M-Corpus Christi professional librarians had little reason to question our long-established university policy 2.3 because it remained in the online and printed Faculty and Staff Handbook as official university policy, professionals continued

to be evaluated and go off probation under its terms, and new professionals were hired under it.

Indeed, while preparing this essay, in September 2015, I contacted the former A&M-Corpus Christi provost who had assumed office in October 2007, about his recollections of the employment condition of the professional librarians in the 2007-2010 period in which he served. He replied forthrightly that the librarian employment status issue was “not part of any discussion in the Provost’s office... to the best of my recollection. The then Director of the Library [who directly reported to the provost] ... did not bring this matter into our regular one-on-one meetings or in the Provost Cabinet meetings.”³⁵

Thus, for three years this new provost did not have word of this discrepancy. The librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi were deprived of any hope for resolution by this new, sympathetic provost, nor were we afforded the extra incentive which such information would have given us to push for a resolution or at least to seek or take advantage of more secure long-term employment elsewhere.

In his 2015 reply to me, that former provost also noted that “we were in the middle of SACS accreditation preparation...” This comment lent support to the suspicions that some of us librarians held in 2011 that the SACS process had been instrumental in keeping us ignorant of the change in our status.³⁶

Probable Role of the 2010 SACS/COC Petition Process, 2007-2010

During 2007-2010, while the A&M-Corpus Christi rank and file professional librarians remained unaware of their employment peril, the university administration was busy with its 2010 accreditation petition to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACS/COC). This approximately three-year process apparently took on more importance than the contradictory status of its professional librarians.

The atmosphere that I sensed on campus and in the general faculty and staff meetings which I attended in those years indicated that the SACS petition process seemed to outrank all other university concerns from late 2007 (when initial discussions began) until its successful completion in 2010. It was clear to most of the staff and faculty that the SACS petition held great importance to the university president. Thus, the university seemed preoccupied with compiling the SACS petition during the time which paralleled the time when the librarians’ status was being ignored.³⁷

Furthermore, the library director played a leadership role in the university’s entire SACS/COC petition effort. According to her vitae, she served as Coordinator of the SACS Compliance Certification Report and Reaffirmation effort from 2007 forward, as well as Co-Chair of the SACS

Reaffirmation Steering Committee from 2008 forward. The president's cabinet meeting minutes from those years indicate that the library director was deeply involved in aspects of the SACS petition effort including everything from the larger compliance matters to making "welcome baskets" for the members of the SACS visitation committee which came to A&M-Corpus Christi in March, 2010, amid much campus preparation.³⁸

When the university submitted its final SACS: Self Study Report in September, 2009, its section on the library stated that professional librarians were recruited and hired by procedures "mandated by the Texas A&M University System and University policy." This statement online linked to policy 2.3, though no system policy was directly included in this link. The library section further noted, following the requirements of 2.3, that "During the fifth complete year of employment . . . , professional librarians come under consideration for formal closing of his or her probationary period." This section even included a "sample letter recommending the closure of this probationary period. . . ." The SACS report likewise contained the university's Faculty and Staff Handbook dated August 2008 which listed policy 2.3 regarding professional librarians. In a separate section, however, the SACS report included the System Policies and Regulations which contained Policy 32.02 and other sub-policies stating that non-faculty employees were "at will."³⁹

But in my examination of this massive, ponderous SACS report I could not find mention by the university that a serious problem existed regarding the status of its professional librarians inherent in the system and university policies.

Once this contradiction became clear to the professional librarians after late August 2010, several of us professional librarians eventually questioned among ourselves whether the university ignored or obscured this contradiction or simply put off grappling with this issue. Several possible scenarios emerged in our thinking: Did the university simply not wish to deal with this issue which may have called for some sort of timely resolution that recognized the vested status of the professional librarians before moving forward with the administration's SACS petition? Was the university administration concerned that revealing this contradiction would have created a snarl with the SACS accreditation report? Was the university concerned that revealing such a contradiction would provoke possible action by the librarians that would have embarrassed the university in the eyes of SACS? Or, more probably, did the university administration simply postpone its librarian issue while dealing with what it saw as the larger issue of producing the SACS petition? This final speculation, in my estimation, summarizes the small concern that university administrations normally give to library professionals.

Prompted by my later inquiry while researching this essay, SACS officials indicated to me that (incredibly in my opinion) such a policy contradiction would not have been an issue to them. But that does not preclude a

perceived concern about the matter on the part of those university officials dealing with the petition itself. People who have dealt with SACS petition efforts have informed me that inflated concerns often arise making supplicants over-react regarding what might be important in getting the petition accepted, regardless of what SACS personnel tell them during the process.⁴⁰

Those of us negatively affected could readily conclude that any of the above scenarios were possible reasons for us not being made aware of our precarious situation. My assessment is, however, that the SACS petition process simply trumped dealing with the librarian employment status issue.

One thing seems certain: The preoccupation of the university administration with the 2010 SACS/COC petition most likely played a role in the failure even to notify us of our predicament, much less resolve it in our favor. Perhaps it would have been more beneficial if relevant administrators had paid attention to the employment plight of the professional librarians, rather than making “welcome baskets” for the SACS visitation team.

Thus, the A&M-Corpus Christi SACS accreditation process and the Texas A&M System’s downgrading of employees’ status had likely coincided to deprive us not only of our vested rights, but also an egregious lapse of time before we librarians learned of our employment condition.

The irony of this situation appears likewise obvious: The university’s preoccupation with the SACS/COC petition actually undercut the stated mission of SACS (that is, to improve the quality of education at a university), if one believes that professional librarians are important to the successful accomplishment of a university’s mission to educate.

The Looming Budget Crisis of 2010

Any explanation of why the professional librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi were finally notified of their “at will” status in 2010 also should include that the campus was responding to the Texas state budget crisis which was acute by late that year. Since hundreds of other non-faculty employees were included in this “at will” announcement in their employment letter for the first time, the A&M-Corpus Christi administration likely wanted or needed to make sure it was on sound legal footing in case layoffs occurred, or so former university officials later informed me. Indeed, in late September, 2010, and with justifiable concern in her voice, the AVP/library director’s administrative assistant pointed out to me wording in the minutes of the September 16, 2010 meeting of the A&M-Corpus Christi’s president’s cabinet that “Texas A&M University has announced that it will make [faculty and staff] cuts effective August 31, 2011.”⁴¹

The professional librarians’ academic status may have been so nuanced or counted for so little in the administrators’ minds that when the HR

department wrote the 2010 appointment letters we were included in the “at will” stack of letters for simplicity’s sake. One sympathetic administrator confided in me in 2010 that HR insisted on there being “two stacks” of letters: that is, faculty who were not at will and all other employees, so that it may never have occurred to HR to notice the implications of the librarians’ academic status. Thus, the university administration simply swept up the librarians in this draconian language, regardless of the nuances of university policy 2.3 and its over 20 years of history.

For sure, I tried mightily through public information requests and otherwise in preparing this essay, but I could never get a conclusive answer regarding the reasons why the university administration or Human Resources waited to include the “at will” language until the first appointment letter in the post SACS petition process, three years after the detrimental 2007 revision of 32.02 or until it did in 2010. Though the president’s cabinet was prompted by its admitted above-mentioned feelings that “the status of non-faculty employees does need to be understood...,” the university informed me through the Texas Attorney General’s Office, in response to my formal request for documentation on their motives, “that after a good faith search for information..., no such information was found.”⁴²

During the writing of this essay, my quest for the university’s side of the story about the origins and timing of these appointment letters included asking several of the key administrators directly involved in the process. The answers I received ranged from “I don’t recall” to “I do not remember!” to silence. The readers can draw their own conclusion regarding such responses.⁴³

Nor apparently did it seem that the A&M-Corpus Christi administration wished in 2010 to try to sort out the contradiction by trying to get its librarian policy 2.3 accepted by the A&M System. I was never aware of such an effort if it did take place or was even contemplated. The September 28, 2007 revision to policy 32.02 had been issued during the first year of the tenure of the same chancellor who questioned the librarian status at College Station, TAMU-K, and TAMU-I. Serving from 2006-2011, this chancellor’s term was described by the A&M student newspaper as a “turbulent run,” especially marked by the strife he had with the College Station president which led to the latter’s resignation in 2009. This chancellor was characterized by a speaker of the College Station faculty senate as “‘known for shooting from the hip.’” But he was also noted for helping the branch campuses in many ways. In short, he was someone who the A&M-Corpus Christi administration would likely have not wanted to question on librarian status. Besides, I think it was perfectly acceptable to the university administration if it now had a group of “at will” librarians rather than librarians protected under university policy 2.3. (The provost who took the position at A&M-Corpus Christi in 2011 and met with the librarians in late March, would tell the faculty senate in November 2011 that the university president said that professional librarians did not and would never have “tenure” at A&M-Corpus Christi, a statement consistent

with the interim provost's verbal dismissal of my arguments for my having continuing appointment at our October 22, 2010 meeting.)⁴⁴

It defies credulity that our university administration missed the contradiction between policies 2.3 and 32.02 from late 2007 forward regarding the employment status of its professional librarians when the heads of so many offices on campus (i.e. the head of HR, the library director, the director of EO, etc.) would also have situationally had access to this policy information for an extended period. The administration not recognizing the problem seems even more unlikely when one remembers that the library director (the unit head) was so capably involved with compiling the SACS report and its many aspects of policies and regulations. (It was on the heels of her commendable efforts with the SACS petition that on September 1, 2010, she received the additional title of assistant vice president and thus held that position as well as library director when the status issue became revealed.)⁴⁵

My Final Involvement for a New Policy

By the end of 2011, hopes for a resolution in our favor were all but extinguished. Among the most important factors for this, our lead faculty senator left the employment of the Bell Library in mid-August. With her, in my estimation, went the most effective negotiator and open communicator relative to our employment status.⁴⁶

In mid-November 2011, the professional librarians were presented with a second policy draft to work on, one which comprised a set of rankings that apparently had been excerpted from the above-mentioned first proposed new policy and amended by the new provost. According to my notations on these events, I received these proposed rankings via email on November 16, 2011 from the AVP/library director. This was the last "new" document with which I would deal before leaving. This document said nothing about "continuing appointment" or any such status.⁴⁷

Our new lead senator on the issue emailed me on November 22, 2011, informing, as noted above, that at the November 18 senate meeting the provost stated the librarians "'do not and cannot have tenure at this university'" and "that there is a move toward annual appointments with contract lengths." Furthermore, our senator noted that the provost said nothing about "continuing appointment," though the minutes from the meeting would reveal that the provost stated "that library staff was on an annual contract." When it was pointed out to the provost that a contradiction existed between the system and university policies, the provost "indicated the need to remedy that." For me, this inconsistency should have been answered correctly and compassionately in our favor by the administration four years previous.⁴⁸

After careful consideration of the November 2011 rankings document, the professional librarians had a productive meeting with the AVP/library

director in December to deal with it. This meeting proved to be the last one among the professional librarians relative to our employment status which I attended, and there was no follow-up from the administration before I left.⁴⁹

By early May 2012, the frustration level and confusion continued to simmer among some of us professional librarians. Though exasperated, I had what seemed to me to be a cordial meeting with the AVP/library director to ask what exactly our employment condition was, to which she again answered that she did not know. She said, however, that the new provost would. I marveled that so far into this issue that the AVP/library director would not have understood the exact status of her professional staff - - which also included her own employment as a librarian.

I had my meeting with the new provost on May 11, 2012 which proved to be the first informative meeting I had on my current status. He told me that he thought the librarians were now contract employees, like “the rest of us.” While I acknowledged his candor, I also knew that if he meant himself by the term “rest of us,” such was not analogous since he also came with tenure in the College of Liberal Arts. Our continuing employment seemingly had been swept away and we had no tenured position elsewhere as he did. But I said nothing.

Thus, from the university administration, I had received misguided paternalism from an interim provost and the president, disingenuousness from the new provost, and an ongoing plea of ignorance from the AVP/library director. Altogether, I viewed these expressions as professionally and personally disrespectful to the entire body of librarians.

One might ask why we did not go as a group to the provost at that time. I believe, based on my ongoing observations, that the answer was complex. Some of the more stalwart among us had left for other library positions elsewhere and the remaining professionals lacked the unity of purpose that plagued us from the start. A couple of us, doubtless for their own reasons, seemingly capitulated to the reality of our lost vested status and now stood with the administration. Others who felt we still had a claim to vested status surmised that approaching the new provost would be futile since they believed he had no intention of supporting our vested rights, more beholden was he to the wishes of the university president and mindful of the fate of the two previous permanent provosts.

During my May 11 meeting with the new provost, I informed him that I had done extensive research on the librarian status situation and asked him if he would like a written explanation of what had transpired regarding our professional librarian status. He answered that he would. I delivered this document on May 22, which incorporated a full narrative of events, including that we had been uninformed for three years. I placed the memorandum in his hands as he walked to his office. Whether he ever read it I have no idea, but I never received any other communication from him

about the matter. His silence spoke loudly to me, however, and verified the reservations that other professionals held about his desire to support our vested status.⁵⁰

The Outcomes

Following my visit with the provost, in July 2012, at age 64, I left the foul work environment of the Mary and Jeff Bell Library, thus terminating my almost twenty-two-year tenure.⁵¹ Not before, however, receiving unanticipated, written rebuke from the administration for my vocal opposition to the degrading of our status. This criticism served as one example of what this issue cost A&M-Corpus Christi's library professionals. Such is the price one can expect to pay for speaking up in the struggle over employees' rights. It also demonstrated that, contrary to the claims of that interim provost to whom I spoke, academic freedom (of which legitimate freedom of expression is a part) no longer had guarantees for librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi.

When I left, university policy 2.3., formally abrogated in September 2007, still remained in the online and printed university Faculty Handbook.

But in leaving I had ample company. Five other professionals moved on immediately before and after my departure, including our two senators during the 2010-2011 period of this controversy, representing a significant staff exodus. While each had "pulling" reasons, four of the more vibrant young professionals who departed felt the discomfort of events, or so they told me. (In 2016, one of these four publicly recalled this episode as an example of poor campus leadership.) This loss of talent that had been at the library in the post-2010 period represented a severe negative consequence of the issue. Such staff turnover is not beneficial to the educational mission of the university.⁵²

Even the AVP/library director soon left the library, though she stayed at the university and continued her ascent in the administration ranks, being elevated by the provost in August 2012, to the title of associate vice president for academic affairs. The library director position would now report to her, a further downgrading of the library whose head had formerly answered to the provost and could directly advocate for resources to the chief academic officer of the university.⁵³

In July-August, the administration also reorganized the library, eliminating at least one professional librarian position. This reorganization had secretly been planned since at least May, 2012. The library moved into what may well be described as a paraprofessional model.⁵⁴

Replacing professional librarians became difficult, almost impossible, which comprised another lamentable outcome. The remaining professional librarians, trying to gain a new policy, stated in a compelling memo in

November 2012 to the faculty senate that it was “becoming increasingly difficult to attract professional librarians that are willing to accept positions in this [current] environment” or “to retain librarians under these conditions.” They noted that many other libraries “offer more advancement and security in their...positions.” As evidence, they noted that since September, 2011, of the seven national searches conducted by the library, “[t]hree of these ... failed when prospective candidates withdrew to accept positions at other institutions. Three of these positions remain vacant.” Due to these empty positions, they further stated, “the library lost 34 months of productivity.” In pursuing the futile searches, “the library ... spent over \$119,000.”⁵⁵

Little wonder they complained. Six rank-and-file professional librarians remained in the Bell Library to affix their names to their petition to the faculty senate. This number constituted fewer than when I began in 1990 for a student body that was more than two and one half times in size in 2012.⁵⁶

The university even delayed hiring my successor to care for the invaluable materials of Special Collections & Archives until it finally bowed to potent community pressure about this neglect and its potentially woeful consequences. This successful public struggle to hire my successor has now become part of archival history as an example of how concerned citizens can move an incalcitrant institution. Even then, the university downgraded that position from associate director, what it had been when I held it, to “librarian and university archivist.” Downgrading of professional librarians at the Mary and Jeff Bell Library seemed to have no end.⁵⁷

During the spring and summer of 2013, I sought answers as well as relief for my professional colleagues at A&M-Corpus Christi by formally contacting SACS/COC. I inquired and ultimately filed a complaint about how A&M-Corpus Christi had handled its professional librarian employment status during its 2010 petition process. Though, as already noted, SACS/COC determined that the school did not violate any SACS accreditation standards, the SACS president stated that some of the academic librarians on SACS staff had been involved in “similar situations” and that such was “disappointing and devastating to the librarians involved....” Thus, SACS had at least been made aware of the problem. Perhaps, I thought, SACS would more closely scrutinize future submissions from such a university.⁵⁸

I could take some satisfaction that my communications with SACS/COC also may have played a role in A&M-Corpus Christi formally clarifying what we already knew had transpired. On the heels of my initial inquiries, on August 1, 2013, policy 2.3 was finally stricken from the A&M-Corpus Christi policy handbook on the grounds that it was “obsolete.” Even when the policy was taken down (two months shy of six years after it had been abrogated in late September 2007 by the A&M System), the university administration apparently did not notify the remaining professional librarians of this action. It came down in silence, just as our loss of

academic status had not been communicated to us in a timely and decent fashion in 2007 or 2010.⁵⁹

After policy 2.3 was expunged, even hiring a new director seemed jinxed in the wake of all the degrading. After an initial search for a new library head failed in 2013, the university administration felt it necessary to hire a search firm, which was unprecedented for the A&M-Corpus Christi library. (During my twenty-two years there, I had been involved in three library director searches, which always used internal search committees and consistently garnered ample qualified candidates.) Open records revealed that in 2013, however, the university committed \$83,000 for the search conducted by an out of state firm. One can readily speculate on whether such extraordinary spending was a matter of the reputation which the Bell Library had garnered within the region because of the degrading of its professionals' status and numbers, as well as its place on the university organizational chart. As one of the A&M-Corpus Christi professionals confided to me: "I think the word is out about us."⁶⁰

When the new library director came on board in 2014 through this costly search, the provost wrote in his letter of appointment that "While it is our hope that you will have a successful career with this university, non-faculty appointments are 'at will,' which means that either you or the university can terminate your employment at any time, with or without cause." Though such language softened the "at will" conditions as they were communicated to us in August, 2010, the message remained the same. The provost who wrote this contract letter left for a new position out of state in early 2015, contributing to the "revolving door" provost situation. As such, he was no longer present to facilitate the new library director's hoped for "successful career with this university...."⁶¹

My efforts on behalf of the librarians' plight continued into 2015 with some solid outcomes, at least in terms of community awareness, public support and dissemination of information about the employment status of librarians. The city's major newspaper, the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, published a guest editorial I wrote entitled "Librarians left in curious limbo" on March 22, thus carrying advocacy for the professional librarians onto the streets. This column contained a seven-hundred-word synopsis of A&M-Corpus Christi's degrading of its professional librarians' status, and I received some positive feedback from professionals and laypersons alike. Feeling that it was of consequence, I widely circulated the column through email.⁶²

Perhaps most gratifying for our cause as a profession, at the time of this writing this column is posted on the wikispace entitled Academic-Librarian-Status, accessible through <https://academic-librarian-status.wikispaces.com/>. This excellent resource, compiled by Chris Lewis of The American University, contains a comprehensive bibliography of commentary and scholarship on librarian status.⁶³

After I left in 2012, the remaining professional librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi worked on a new policy for the next three years. They finally achieved it in late 2015. When it finally came, however, the new policy was essentially inferior in terms of job security to policy 2.3.

As traced through the minutes of the faculty senate, achieving this new policy came slowly. In August, 2012, librarian “at will” versus “continuing employment” status remained as an issue, though by November the librarians had apparently shed any quest for the latter and called for “fixed-term professional faculty status,” a model identical to a new form of non-tenure faculty employment recently formalized by A&M-Corpus Christi. For faculty, this form of employment was called the “Professional Assistant Professor,” which took on the ironically accurate acronym “PAP” on campus and represented a second-tier form of instructor status. In its initial draft submitted to the faculty senate in November, this PAP policy adapted for librarians called for a fixed term five-year contract with a system of promotions. As such, it called for all the responsibilities of being faculty but without tenure. Though the librarians could never earn a vested right to their jobs, the proposed policy referred to them as “faculty.”⁶⁴

In late January, 2013, this librarian PAP proposal was to be sent to the provost and was seemingly under consideration throughout the year. The faculty affairs committee met with the provost in October to discuss the librarians’ policy; in November, that committee had to revise the promotion part. Word reached me in mid-November that the university administration apparently objected to any mention of “faculty” in the new library policy document and insisted that the word be expunged, thus perhaps explaining the need to make the revisions.⁶⁵

Offering little encouragement to an expeditious resolution to the librarian employment matter, when the provost presented the faculty senate with twenty-four priorities for the new academic year in September, 2013, the list did not even include librarian status. It did, however, enumerate “Preparation of the SACS 5-year report” near the top.⁶⁶

The year 2014 came with the library’s lead senator assiduously working with the provost’s office to make the necessary changes to the document. By late February, the alterations had been accomplished and the librarians, it was reported, “were comfortable with the document . . . as it is now.” With a final touch added, the senate approved it in late March. Sometime thereafter, the policy draft went to be reviewed by the system’s Office of General Counsel (OGC). In late November, 2014, a faculty senator asked to see the document that had emerged from the system legal office. “The Provost will look into it,” the senate was told, “and report back.”⁶⁷ From these slow proceedings, one gets a whiff of the ongoing down-prioritizing that surrounded the entire issue.

By late March, 2015, the document was either still at the system legal office or had gone back there because the faculty senate minutes state that the

OGC was “making revisions” so that the policy could become “official.” Those minutes also recorded that the provost, associate vice president, and the president would meet “in the near future” about the matter. (One might wonder why these same three people could not have come up with an equitable resolution back in 2011.) Whether these individuals met or not, the policy seemed to disappear from the faculty senate radar until mid-September when the faculty affairs committee had to request a copy of the document as it had returned from the OGC. But during the over three years since I had left, the librarians remained in the status occupied by all other non-faculty staff; that is, “at will” and in effect non-professional.⁶⁸

Finally, on September 28, 2015, the university approved of its new policy 12.99.99.C0.03 for the “Appointment, Rank, and Promotion of Professional Librarians,” eight years to the day after the system had abrogated librarian policy 2.3. It proved to be a version of “PAP” adjusted for librarians. It stated that “[a]ll appointment letters will indicate that the position is a non-tenure accruing, term appointment...” Explaining at length a list of rankings which included assistant, associate, and senior librarians with contracts of one, two, and three years respectively, the policy called for the responsibilities of faculty but without the ability to gain a vested interest in the job.⁶⁹

On the plus side, the employee did not remain instantaneously “at will” during her/his employment. Rather, the policy stated that the librarian could only be terminated for “good cause” within the term of her/his appointment. At the end of these one, two, or three-year contract cycle, however, the university had the right not to extend the contract. In such a case, the university was to provide the employee with written notice “normally not later than 90 days in advance of the appointment’s expiration date, of its intention not to extend the appointment.” In short, the librarian’s right to employment did not extend further than the one, two or three-year appointment cycle, thus making the employee’s status “at will” at the end of the appointment, cause or no cause. As such, the librarian was on a continual treadmill of being reappointed at the discretion of the university.⁷⁰

The list of reasons in the new policy as cause for dismissal before the end of the appointment term included nine items, up from the previous seven of policy 2.3. One of these added reasons included item (b), a simple statement “insubordination,” an ill-defined term at best. Thus, the administration’s control over the employee and ability to “manage” the workforce was near complete.⁷¹

In sum, the new PAP policy for librarians constituted a notch above being totally at will which had effectively been the case for the years, 2007-2015, but below the security which the off-probation librarian had once held under policy 2.3. Regardless of the new policy’s elaborate language describing ranks and promotions, the loss of the A&M-Corpus Christi professional librarians’ most important right, that is vested status, had been codified

by the new policy that the librarians had apparently shaped and adopted for themselves. Their downgrading had now been set in university policy. One librarian lamented to me that “I guess it’s just going to be harder to keep these jobs.”

In communicating with the librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi during 2015, I had urged them not to embrace this PAP employment model. They obviously had not heeded my admonition. With policy 12.99.99.C0.03, they set their status as transitory employees, no matter how many faculty committees they served on, graduations they attended, or scholarly contributions they made in pursuit of achieving these promotions and holding their jobs.

This downgraded status begs a couple of important questions. First, even though the professional librarians had achieved a new policy, why would anyone trust an institution after it summarily abrogated a previous status which gave the employee a fundamental right, failed to tell them of it, and then did not, in my opinion, exhibit respectful behavior to the affected employees? Second, why would any mature professional take a position in such an untrustworthy climate? The answers to both are just as obvious: Such an entity cannot be trusted, but people need employment, especially professionals just entering the market, and they will take what is available, even after academic status had been cut out from under them. However, as they develop their skills the best of them likely will look for other, more secure and reliable places to work and the talent drain from such institutions as A&M-Corpus Christi will continue.

Postscript:

This example of degrading professional librarian status calls for a few additional observations. Beyond the lack of communication among the professionals from 2008 forward and the unity that the A&M-Corpus Christi professionals could not muster in 2010, some extra fault must lay at the feet of the librarians as well. To be considered a professional, one must conduct oneself as such. During my last years at A&M-Corpus Christi, I observed too much non-professional horseplay transpiring, such as cookie parties, pot luck lunches, birthday celebrations, and other such continual informal events which projected an immature ambient. Toward the end of my tenure, for example, a barbeque took place on campus at which the library professionals posed with the paraprofessionals (the latter clad in pseudo-cowboy attire) for an online photo declaring themselves the “Library Posse.” Broadcasting such an image, while doubtless done innocently, does not portray a professionalism that the administration, faculty or students would have respected.⁷²

On the other hand, I must assume some of the responsibility for the lame opposition to what happened to us. Once I had determined what was transpiring and once I understood the disunity among the entire group of professionals, I should have rallied a few of the more stalwart and suggested

a legal effort to gain our grandfathered status. For me, this should have taken place by March, 2011. After all, university officials had placed their signatures on our off-probationary status and policy 2.3 still remained, if in shaky terms. Numerous obvious reasons precluded me from doing this, and hindsight is 20/20, but I would suggest to anyone facing a similar situation to determine as soon as possible if the administration is dealing in bad faith and to seek legal advice and whatever action might bring redress in the court system to keep what one has already earned.

In such situations, one should also follow a few guidelines. While remaining civil, assume that you are in an adversarial situation with those in the administration, unless they have a proven track record of support and integrity. Second, trust few, if anyone, in positions of authority. Persons such as the head of employee relations are admittedly there to protect the institution, not the individual employee. Other administrators also owe their first allegiance to keeping their jobs or advancing their own careers. Third, gather as much information as possible as expeditiously as possible, through online research as well as speaking with people. As information managers, librarians know better than anyone else that knowledge is power. In the case of the librarians at A&M-Corpus Christi, we generally failed to follow those simple rules.

One must refrain, however, from blaming the victims for the transgression against them. As the people at SACS noted, such situations were “disappointing and devastating to the librarians involved....” We rank and file librarians never received the explanation, much less the apology that we deserved from whichever administrators had a hand in doing what they did. The reader must judge for her/himself whether this episode was altogether a case of mismanagement, incompetence, subterfuge, or some combination of the three. Would it have been impossible for the administration to handle it differently in a manner which lessened the negative impact on the professional librarians? Is it inevitable that the individual employee cannot rely on the administration to watch after his/her best interests, as one system HR person told me during my inquiries into this episode? Has that fundamental relationship of trust between administrators and employees, so vital to the successful operation of an institution, been dissolved? Can employees, in this case professional librarians, rely on administrators to treat them with the fundamental respect they deserve? Can employees rely on the culture of assessment by agencies like SACS, which are after all funded by the member institutions? For me, when I reflect on the episode, the words “trust” and “good faith” in the university administration and affiliated individuals and agencies that I dealt with do not come to mind.

This affair forms a case study of downgrading professional librarian status, with a full cast of characters. One can only hope that the message of this policy history resonates in some positive manner, but that will be determined by the actions of other institutions and individuals, including the university systems, university administrators, library organizations. and the librarians

themselves. Of great importance, the actions of individual professional librarians play perhaps the most essential role in future outcomes. Does the individual professional librarian eschew the welfare of the group and become involved in marketing her/himself, bent on achieving her/his self-interested professional goals, even at the expense of fellow professionals, the library profession as a whole, and the constituents that libraries serve? Or do professional librarians see the benefit of vested rights to their employment, unify and work for the good of the many?

The example of the A&M-Corpus Christi librarians, 2007-2015, demonstrates that the library profession, indeed all of academia, finds itself in a struggle. A sampling of the many responses I received from individuals to whom I sent my column entitled "Librarians left in curious limbo" vividly demonstrates that tussle. On the one hand, a retired liberal arts dean and seasoned educator replied: "Can anybody really believe that if [institutions] can do this to librarians then they cannot do it to faculty? I found the job security of tenure [i.e. vested status] to be important in getting a good night's sleep.... Oddly, folks mostly don't seem to realize that meritorious performance is no guarantee of continued employment anywhere.... Maybe, especially in educational institutions." On the other hand, a Texas library dean to whom I sent the newspaper column declined even to forward it to his professional staff, stating that "if I were to distribute these pieces as dean ... [it] is a kind of endorsement of views. [T]he matters you identify are ... the concerns of TAMU-CC with which I am uninvolved and know nothing about." Such responses reflected a cold dichotomy revolving around such issues – engagement versus timidity, solidarity versus disunity.⁷³

If engagement and solidarity are not followed, the fall will come. First for librarians, and then for regular teaching faculty who across Texas and the country are feeling the wave of contract employment being increasingly foisted upon them. As one of my library colleagues at A&M-College Station told me during my investigations in 2011: "Librarians are like the gazelles that were broken away from the herd and eaten." Teaching faculty may well already be seeing the slow death of tenure in their ranks, echoing the opinion of my retired dean associate who warned that what is done to the librarians can also be done to faculty, if only incrementally.⁷⁴

Struggle or not, I hope that librarians can strive for better than what happened at A&M-Corpus Christi. Most professional librarians I have known (though lamentably not all) have chosen their line of work for lofty reasons and will continue to struggle for improvement of the employment status and security of professionals, just as those early librarians did when they founded their associations in the past. Professional librarians in the public sector of academia are currently in dark times. Given the present political climate the future may well become even darker. Though difficult, let us heed Wendy Davis' words: "When we remain silent, we participate in our own marginalization."⁷⁵ Let us speak out, support those who also resist and strive to make this nighttime simply a prelude to a new dawn.

Endnotes

- 1 "CCSU Begins Projects," *Southwestern Archivist*, Fall, 1991, 22; Thomas H. Kreneck, "Documenting the History of Corpus Christi: Special Collections and Archives," *Touchstone* (Vol. XV, 1996), 76-85; *Ibid.*, "The Dr. Hector P. García Papers: A Research Resource for Texas, and More," *Texas Library Journal* (Volume 72, Number 2, Summer 1996), 80-83; *Ibid.*, "Recovering the 'Lost' Manuscripts of Jovita González: The Production of South Texas Mexican-American Literature," *Texas Library Journal*, (Volume 74, Number 2, Summer 1998), 76-79; *Ibid.*, "Illustrating Mexican-American History: A Case of Library/Community/Texshare Cooperation," *Texas Library Journal* (Volume 75, Number 3, Fall 1999), 118-121; *Ibid.*, "Justice for my People: The Dr. Hector P. García Story," *Southwestern Archivist*, February 2003, 15; Thomas H. Kreneck and Bruce S. Cheeseman, "Map of the Santa Gertrudis Estate, 1871: A Foundation Document of King Ranch," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (Volume CVII, No. 2, October, 2004), 230-244; Thomas H. Kreneck, "Dr. Hector P. García: An Archivist Historian's Perspective," Chapter in *Tejano Epic: Essays in Honor of Felix D. Almaraz, Jr.*, Edited by Arnoldo De Leon (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2005), 99-113; Luis G. Gomez, *Crossing the Rio Grande: Memories of an Immigrant Life*, Edited by Guadalupe Valdez, Jr. and Thomas H. Kreneck (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006); Thomas H. Kreneck, Introduction to Rosie Mirabal Garza, *El Progreso, 1939-1940: The Work of Rodolfo Mirabal and Dora Cervera Mirabal* (Corpus Christi: Printers Unlimited Press, 2007), 15; *Ibid.*, "Dan Kilgore: 'Demon Collector' and Texas History Benefactor," Chapter in *Collecting Texas: Essays on Texana Collectors and the Creation of Research Libraries*, Co-edited with Gerald R. Saxon (Dallas: The Book Club of Texas, 2010), 162-180; *Ibid.*, "Congressional Papers of Solomon P. Ortiz Received," *Southwestern Archivist*, November 2011, 18; "Keeping Us Well Preserved," Website of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, http://www.tamucc.edu/profiles/nov09/profile_kreneck.html (accessed 9/16/2014).
- 2 Annoyed Librarian, "Goodbye, Faculty Status," March 11, 2013, *Library Journal*, <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/blogs/annoyedlibrarian/2013/03/11/goodbye-faculty-status/> (accessed 9/3/2014) and Sydney Dunn, "Do Librarians Need Tenure? Depends on Which Ones You Ask," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 13, 2013, <https://chroniclevitae.com/news/139-do-librarians-need-tenure-depends-on-which-ones-you-ask> (accessed 9/3/2014) for current statements on the loss of faculty status among library professionals. "A Guide to the professional status of academic librarians in the United States (and other places)," <http://academic-librarian-status.wikispaces.com/> (accessed 9/19/2014) for a listing of the various categories of librarian status including "Librarians without faculty status but with status similar to tenure."
- 3 "Employment, Responsibilities, and Evaluation of Professional Librarians." *Policy and Procedures Manual, Corpus Christi State University*, Classification Number: 2.2.10, 1-6. Copy in possession of author. For description of professionally-recognized Academic Status see "Association of College & Research Libraries Guidelines for Academic Status for College and University Librarians," Revised by the ACRL Committee on the Status of Academic Librarians and approved by the ACRL board of Directors on January 23, 2007, sections on Governance and Contracts, <http://www.acrl.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/guidelinesacademic.cfm> (accessed on 12/21/2010). Copy in author's possession.
- 4 "Employment, Responsibilities, and Evaluation of Professional Librarians." *Policy and Procedures Manual, Corpus Christi State University*, Classification Number: 2.2.10, 1-6. Copy in author's possession.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 "Association of College & Research Libraries Guidelines for Academic Status for College and University Librarians," Revised by the ACRL Committee on the Status of Academic Librarians and approved by the ACRL board of Directors on January 23, 2007, sections on Governance and Contracts, <http://www.acrl.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/guidelinesacademic.cfm> (accessed on 12/21/2010). Copy in author's possession.
- 7 Thomas H. Kreneck to Benjamin T. Wakashige, Memorandum dated 12/12/94; *Ibid.*, Memo dated 3/17/95; *Ibid.*, Memorandum dated 7/29/95; Benjamin T. Wakashige to Tito Guerrero, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Memorandum dated 12/5/95; Tito Guerrero, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, to Thomas H. Kreneck, Memorandum dated 12/7/95. Documents in author's possession.
- 8 Thomas H. Kreneck to Sandra Harper, Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs,

- January 22, 2001. Document in author's possession.
- 9 Director, Mary and Jeff Bell Library to Thomas H. Kreneck, August 23, 2010, Document in author's possession. As noted in the text of the article, I will refrain from mentioning specific names of persons involved in the downgrading episode. By the time the degrading episode began, library directors O'Keeffe, Wakashige, and Kratz had long since departed A&M-Corpus Christi and were thus unassociated with these events, 2007-2015. The library director who sent the 2010 "at will" letter had been appointed to the position in 2003.
 - 10 "Employment, Responsibilities, and Evaluation of Professional Librarians," Section 2.3, *Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Handbook*, 1-4, <http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/faculty%20handbook/section%202/23/pdf> (accessed by library colleague, 8/30/2010); Library Colleague to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, August 30, 2010. Documents in author's possession.
 - 11 Dora Garza, Administrative Assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, July 25, 2013, Open Records Request by Author, A&M-Corpus Christi designation CC-13-054. Document in author's possession.
 - 12 Mary and Jeff Bell Library Staff Meeting minutes, August 17, 2010, 1, Charli McCandless, Administrative Assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, December 16, 2014, Open Records Request by Author, CC-14-035. Author's notations of meeting among librarians, September 30, 2010, from author's Day Minder 2010/2011 calendar, in author's possession. Perhaps due to my profession as an archivist historian I perfunctorily maintained such notes. Although after September 1, 2010, the official title of the incumbent head of the Bell Library was Assistant Vice President and Director, Mary and Jeff Bell Library, for brevity and clarity, I will refer to her as AVP/library director.
 - 13 Library faculty senators to Thomas H. Kreneck and other professional librarians, emails, October 7, 2010, 3:39 p.m. and 4:03 p.m. Documents in author's possession.
 - 14 President's Cabinet Minutes, October 11, 2010, Open Records Request by Author, Number CC-14-077. Documents in author's possession.
 - 15 AVP/library director to Thomas H. Kreneck and other professional librarians, email, October 12, 2010, 9:39 a.m. Document in author's possession.
 - 16 Thomas H. Kreneck to AVP/library director and professional librarians, email, October 12, 2010, 11:22 a.m.; library director to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, October 13, 2010, 4:56 p.m.; Thomas H. Kreneck to library director, email, October 13, 2010, 5:35 p.m. Documents in author's possession.
 - 17 Thomas H. Kreneck to AVP/library director, emails, October 13, 2010, 5:13 p.m. and 5:35 p.m. Documents in author's possession.
 - 18 Library senator to Thomas H. Kreneck and other professional librarians, email, October 18, 2010, 2:45 p.m. Document in author's possession.
 - 19 Thomas H. Kreneck to library senator and other professional librarians, emails, October 18, 2010, 3:11 p.m., 3:34 p.m., 5:50 p.m. Documents in author's possession.
 - 20 AVP/library director to Thomas H. Kreneck and other professional librarians, email, October 21, 2010, 9:36 a.m. Document in author's possession.
 - 21 Thomas H. Kreneck to AVP/library director, email, October 21, 2010, 4:36 p.m. Document in author's possession.
 - 22 Dora Garza, Administrative Assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, May 1, 2013, Open Records Request by Author, CC-13-035(2) stating provosts' tenures. Document in author's possession. This turnover, I had been told at the time, was mainly due to the president's dissatisfaction with their work. See also Thomas H. Kreneck, "The door that should not revolve," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, May 3, 2015, 21A.
 - 23 My recollections of this meeting are also based on notes I took immediately afterwards labeled Memorandum of Record, October 22, 2010. Document in author's possession.
 - 24 AVP/library director to Thomas H. Kreneck, October 25, 2010. Letter in author's possession.
 - 25 On December 13, 2010, I reviewed the packets of these two librarians in the AVP/library director's office, and then met with the other librarians on December 16, during which we voted to recommend them being taken off probation. From author's DayMinder 2010/2011 calendar. Calendar in author's possession. Special Collections & Archives Department Monthly Report, December, 2010, report in author's possession and in AVP/library director's files. Memorandum, Interim Provost/VPAA to President, Re. Continuing Appointment of librarian in question. Document in author's possession.
 - 26 Librarian's date of hire, shown as December 2010, <http://touch.www.linkedin>.

- com/?sessionId=3161399891066880&voyurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.linkedin.com2Fm%2F%3Fsess.... (accessed 11/15/2015). Document in author's possession.
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 - 28 Director of Human Resources, A&M-Corpus Christi to Thomas Kreneck, email, March 7, 2011. Document in author's possession.
 - 29 Associate Director, Human Resources, A&M-Corpus Christi to Manager, Policy and Compliance, TAMUS, CC Thomas Kreneck, email, March 14, 2011, 12:53 pm; Manager, Policy and Compliance, TAMUS to Associate Director, Human Resources, A&M-Corpus Christi, CC Thomas Kreneck, email, March 14, 2011, 4:09 pm; Stacy L. Flores to Thomas Kreneck, CC Cindy Hanson and Carolyn Krenek, email, March 24, 2011, 10:18 am; Thomas Kreneck to Manager, Policy and Compliance, TAMUS and Associate Director, Human Resources, A&M-Corpus Christi, email, March 23, 2011, 11:15 am. Texas A&M University System Policy 32.02 Discipline and Dismissal of employees, Approved February 27, 1995 (MO 44-95), Revised July 26, 1996 (MO 169-96), Revised March 23, 2000 (MO 65-2000), Revised September 28, 2007 (MO -2000); Texas A&M University System Policy 32.02.02 Discipline and Dismissal of Nonfaculty Employees, November 4, 1997, Revised September 18, 2000, Revised September 28, 2007; List of Agenda Items and Reports (9/24/07), Committee Meetings and Board Meeting, September 27-28, 3, <http://assets.system.tamus.edu/files/bor/pdf/AgendaArchive/2007-09/2007-9-27-28-REVISED-INDEX.pdf>, accessed 10/2/17; Minutes of the Meeting of the Ad Hoc Policy Review Committee, Board of Regents, the Texas A&M University System, Friday, September 28, 2007, College Station, Texas, Approval of Revisions to System Policy 32.02 (Discipline and Dismissal of Employees) TAMUS, Item 24; Chancellor to Members, Board of Regents, The Texas A&M University System, Subject: Approval of Revisions to System Policy 32.02 Discipline and Dismissal of Employees, August 31, 2007; Agenda Item No. 24, Agenda Item Briefing, Submitted by: Chancellor, Subject: Approval of Revisions to System Policy 32.02, Discipline and Dismissal of Employees; Item 24, Exhibit F, 32.02, Discipline and Dismissal of Employees [Changes to policy boldly marked in red in this draft of Exhibit F]; Minutes – September 27-28, 2007, Minute Order 242-2007 (Agenda Item 24), Approval of Revisions to System Policy 32.02 Discipline and Dismissal of Employees; All from Texas A&M University Public Records Support to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, December 13, 2012, Open Records Request by author, R001490-081717. Documents in author's possession.
 - 30 Anonymous telephone conversations in 2011 with author. I re-verified my initial understanding of the time frame of inclusion of the Revision to 32.02 and 32.02.02 into the System rules in an August 26, 2014 telephone conversation with Manager, Policy and Compliance, TAMUS.
 - 31 Anonymous telephone conversations with sources within the TAMU system and A&M-Corpus Christi administrations by author.
 - 32 Resume of Director, Employee Relations, Equal Opportunity, Training and Development, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, 1999 forward, Charli McCandless, Administrative Assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, September 21, 2017, Open Records Request by Author, R001666-091417; Professional Profile of Director of Human Resources at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, 1994 forward, accessed online through LinkedIn; Dora Garza, Administrative Assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, May 1, 2013, Open Records Request by Author, CC-13-035 stating provosts' tenures; Thomas H. Kreneck to AVP/library director, December 21, 2007 and January 2, 2008, recommendations for Continuing Appointment clearly indicate post-September 2007 Revision use of University Policy 2.3 and my close involvement in this process. Documents in author's possession.
 - 33 Anonymous in-person and telephone conversations during 2014-2015 with present and past professional librarians at TAMU-College Station, TAMU-K and TAMU libraries with author. Condition of anonymity was at the request of all the professionals providing this information. Fear of "getting involved" by name or of "repercussions" contributed to these requests for anonymity.
 - 34 Anonymous in-person and telephone conversations with professional librarians at TAMU-K and TAMU libraries by author. Condition of anonymity at the request of the professionals providing this information.

- 35 Former provost (2007-2010) to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, September 26, 2015. Document in author's possession.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 President's Cabinet Minutes, A&M-Corpus Christi, 2007-2010, obtained through various requests. Documents in author's possession. For example, as early as the January 2007 PC meeting, the sitting provost emphatically told the members that "we need to speed up the [SACS] planning process."
- 38 Vitae for Director, Mary and Jeff Bell Library, 8, Cassandra Hinojosa, Public Affairs Specialist, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, June 4, 2013, Open Records Request, CC-14-037; Minutes of President's Cabinet Meetings, 2007-2010. For an example of the library director's intimate involvement in the SACS process see PC minutes, December 10, 2009, 2-3. For the notation regarding the "welcome baskets" see PC minutes, January 25, 2010, 1. Documents in author's possession. These sources support author's own observations of the library director's focus on successfully leading the SACS petition team in those years.
- 39 "Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi SACS Self-Study Report," Date: 9/2/2009 (accessed online by author, 11/30/11). For statement in the A&M-Corpus Christi SACS Report on the Mary and Jeff Bell Library staff see section 3.8.3, 1-2. (print document accessed online 1/13/2017). The SACS report included Faculty Handbook, August 2008 in Section 3.2.6 and referenced System Policies and Regulations in Section 2.1. Documents in author's possession. As of the time of this writing, the A&M-Corpus Christi SACS Self-Study Report, Date: 9/2/2009 can be accessed at <https://tamucc.xitrac.net/sacs/submission/home.html>
- 40 See President, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, to author, February 21, 2014, for statement regarding the SACS belief that "The change in status of an employment category is not an issue related to accreditation." Document in author's possession. Anonymous conversations with author regarding university personnel involved in SACS petition efforts, 2014.
- 41 Anonymous conversations in 2015 by author with former A&M-Corpus Christi administrator who followed the issue of the "at will" statement in the 2010 appointment letters. President's Cabinet Minutes, September 16, 2010, 2, for statement on "Faculty and Staff Cuts at TAMU."
- 42 Anonymous conversation by author in 2010 with A&M-Corpus Christi administrator regarding the "two stacks" of letters. Regarding author's attempts at securing answers and documents regarding the use of the "at will" wording by the A&M-Corpus Christi administration, see author's email exchange with Director of Human Resources, A&M-Corpus Christi, April 11, 2014 and May 12-14, 2014; Charli McCandless, Administrative Assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, July 28, 2014, Open Records Request by author, CC-14-061 stating "There are no documents that answer these questions." *Ibid.*, email dated November 4, 2014, CC-14-093 stating "the information responsive to your request is not available." Thomas H. Kreneck to Open Records Division, Texas Attorney General's Office, Faxed memorandum dated November 7, 2014 regarding "Failure by Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi to Provide Documents Requested under Open Records;" Tamara R. Strain to Thomas Kreneck, December 17, 2014, containing the university's certification dated December 10, 2014, noting "that after a good faith search for information...., no such information was found." Thomas H. Kreneck to President, A&M-Corpus Christi, email, October 25, 2015. Documents in author's possession.
- 43 Author's email exchange with Director of Human Resources, A&M-Corpus Christi, April 11, 2014 and May 12-14, 2014; Thomas H. Kreneck to Interim Provost, A&M-Corpus Christi, email, March 6, 2017, and Interim Provost to Thomas H. Kreneck, email dated March 10, 2017; Thomas H. Kreneck to President, A&M-Corpus Christi, email, October 25, 2015. See also Thomas H. Kreneck to Chief of Staff to President, California State University, Sacramento, email, April 24, 2017 and Chief of Staff, California State University, Sacramento to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, April 25, 2017. Documents in author's possession.
- 44 "Former A&M System chancellor...ends turbulent run," *The Eagle*, March 12, 2012, online; Tribpedia entry on former A&M chancellor, n.d., *The Texas Tribune*, online site <http://www.texastribune.org/tribpedia>. Private conversation between library faculty senator and author noting that the message that librarians do not and cannot have tenure came from the president through the provost. Our conversation took place in late November, shortly after the November 18, 2011 Faculty Senate meeting. Faculty Senate Minutes, November 11,

2011. and Library Faculty Senator to author, email, November 22, 2011, quote the provost stating, respectively, “librarians do not and cannot have faculty status” and “Librarians do not and will not have tenure at this university.” Documents in author’s possession.
- 45 Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs to Director, Mary and Jeff Bell Library, August 31, 2009 and August 23, 2010 (letters of appointment Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi); Mary and Jeff Bell Library Staff Meeting Minutes, August 17, 2010, 1, noting the director’s “new title, Assistant Vice President and Library Director effective September 1st.” Charli McCandless, Administrative Assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, December 16, 2014, Open Records Request by author, CC-14-105. Documents in author’s possession.
- 46 Texas A&M University Public Records Support/Charli McCandless, administrative assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, February 17, 2016, Open Records Request by author, W000328-020416 stating the lead library faculty senator’s employment hire and separation dates with university. Documents in author’s possession.
- 47 Draft, Librarian Ranks and Promotion DRAFT August 31, 2011, Revised November 2, 2011; Memo of Record/Understanding Current 2 Draft, April 28, 2012, From: Thomas H. Kreneck, 4; Memorandum, Thomas H. Kreneck to Provost, May 21, 2012, 5. Documents in author’s possession.
- 48 Library senator and author email exchange, November 22, 2011. Though the Faculty Senate Minutes were not available to the author at the time of these events, for further examination of this FS meeting see Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes, November 18, 2011. A&M-Corpus Christi FS minutes accessed 1/1/17 at: http://faculty-senate.tamucc.edu/agenda_minutes_archived.html. Documents in author’s possession.
- 49 December 8, 2011 meeting notations, author’s DayMinder 2011/2012 calendar; Memorandum, Thomas H. Kreneck to Provost, May 21, 2012, 5. Documents in author’s possession.
- 50 Memorandum, Thomas H. Kreneck to Provost, May 21, 2012, 5. Document in author’s possession.
- 51 Elaine Marsilio, “Archive expert Kreneck retires,” *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, July 4, 2012, 1B, 4B; “Associate Director for Special Collections and Archives retiring after 22 Years,” *Island Waves* (Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi), July 19, 2012, 2; “Kreneck Retires As Associate Director for Special Collections And Archives,” *The Islander* (Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi), Fall 2012, 8; *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (October 2012), 187; *Southwestern Archivist* (November 2012), 30.
- 52 Thomas H. Kreneck, “Librarians left in curious limbo,” *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, March 22, 2015, 22A; “Merger talks highlight need for stronger academic leadership at A&M-CC,” Letter to the Editor, *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, November 16, 2016, 6A.
- 53 Appointment Letter, Provost to Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, August 31, 2012; Director of Human Resources to Provost, email, August 27, 2012; Director of Human Resources to Vice President for Finance and Administration, email, August 27, 2012; Assistant Vice President and Library Director to Provost, email, July 19, 2012 and attachment entitled “New ORG Proposal for [Associate Vice President],” July 17, 2012; Vice President for Finance and Administration to Provost, email, July 12, 2012. All from Dora Garza, Administrative Assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email. December 13, 2012, Open Records Request by author, CC-12-096. Documents in author’s possession.
- 54 Attachment entitled “Library Organizational Chart,” also labeled “ReORG by title: 5/18/2012” notes “New Library Organization Eliminates 2 librarians;” Vice President and Library Director to Provost, email, July 18, 2012, notes that the library was “eliminating one PIN...toward the reorganization.” All from Dora Garza, Administrative Assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email dated December 13, 2012, Open Records Request by Author, CC-12-096. Documents in author’s possession. This discrepancy in number of librarian positions eliminated might be explained by anonymous telephone conversations I had with sources explaining that one position was eliminated and one position was to be left vacant.
- 55 Memo from A&M-Corpus Christi Librarians to Speaker and Members of the Faculty Senate [unsigned], November 14, 2012, with attachment Draft 11/16/12, 12.99.99.C2.03, Appointment, Rank, and Promotion of Fixed Term Professional Track Faculty Librarians. Documents in author’s possession.
- 56 Ibid. In 1989, the university had 4,000 students. By the fall of 2012, it had 10,510. See *Corpus Christi State University Catalog, 1989-1990*, 5, and “Texas A&M University-

- Corpus Christi Reports Record Enrollment,” November 7, 2012, <http://tamucc.edu/news/2012/11/2012FallEnrollment.html#.WIDFxrldHIU> (accessed 1/18/2017). I recall the library boasting seven other professionals, not counting the director, at the time I began working there in late 1990
- 57 Thomas H. Kreneck, “Archival Ethics and Community Support: Personal Lessons from Corpus Christi, Texas,” *Southwestern Archivist*, November 2013, Vol. 36, No. 4), 32. This article also appeared as various editions in *Historia Chicana* (Listserv of the Mexican American Studies Program, University of North Texas), December 4, 2013; *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, December 24, 2013, 6A; and *AACR Newsletter: Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable* (Society of American Archivists), February, 2014, Vol. 28, No. 2, 7. The author expanded this essay into formal presentations delivered at the 2015 annual meeting of the Texas State Historical Association in Corpus Christi, Texas, and the 2015 annual conference of the Society of Southwest Archivists in Arlington, Texas.
 - 58 Thomas H. Kreneck to SACS, email, March 24, 2013 mark my first formal inquiry to SACS/COC relative to the librarian employment status matter. Also, SACS/COC on-site visit committee chair to author, emails, April 8 and April 26, 2013, represent some of my other earliest inquires with SACS/COC about the situation. SACS/COC president to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, April 21, 2014. Documents in author’s possession.
 - 59 Dora Garza, Administrative Assistant, to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, September 3, 2013, Public Information Request, Our No. CC-13-068, stating taking down policy 2.3. Document in author’s possession. Anonymous telephone conversations with select librarians.
 - 60 Mary and Jeff Bell Library Staff Meeting (minutes), August 21, 2013, Charli McCandless to author, email, July 15, 2015, Public Information Request Number CC-15-062; Thomas H. Kreneck, “A&M-CC’s dollars too precious for this,” *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, February 22, 2015, 21A; Texas A&M Univ-Corpus Christi Purchasing Document Report, Executive Search -Library Director, 10/30/2013; President’s Cabinet Minutes, October 18, 2013, 3, Dora Garza to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, December 4, 2013, Public Information Request Number CC-13-100. Documents in author’s possession.
 - 61 Provost to incoming library director, May 5, 2014, Cassandra Hinojosa, Public Affairs Specialist, to author, email, May 28, 2014, Public Information Request No. CC-14-036. Documents in author’s possession. Amber Quaid, “Say goodbye to [Provost],” *Island Waves* (Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi), April 30, 2015, 1; Kreneck, “The door that should not revolve,” *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, May 3, 2015, 21A.
 - 62 Kreneck, “Librarians left in curious limbo,” *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, March 22, 2015, 22A.
 - 63 <https://academic-librarian-, status.wikispaces.com/Others%27+commentary+on+library+faculty+status> (accessed 4/14/2017). Chris Lewis to Thomas H. Kreneck, email, April 20, 2015. Documents in author’s possession.
 - 64 Faculty Senate Retreat Minutes, August 15, 2012, 1, 4; Faculty Senate Minutes, November 16, 2012, 1; Memo from A&M-Corpus Christi Librarians to Speaker and Members of the Faculty Senate, November 14, 2012, with attachment Draft 11/16/12, 12.99.99.C2.03, Appointment, Rank, and Promotion of Fixed Term Professional Track Faculty Librarians. Documents in author’s possession. All faculty senate meeting minutes can be accessed online at http://faculty-senate.tamucc.edu/agenda_minutes_archived.html.
 - 65 Faculty Senate Minutes, January 25, 2013, 1, April 26, 2013, 1, August 29, 2013, 6, October 18, 2013, 5, and November 15, 2013, 4; Anonymous telephone conversations with select campus personnel by author.
 - 66 Faculty Senate Minutes, September 20, 2013, 4-5.
 - 67 Faculty Senate Minutes, January 24, 2014, 4, February 21, 2014, 3, March 21, 2014, 2, April 25, 2014, 3, and November 24, 2014, 3.
 - 68 Faculty Senate Minutes, March 27, 2015, 3 and September 18, 2015, 3. In early 2015, after three years of monitoring these protracted dealings (November 2012-2015), I recalled humorously a statement from the administrative criticism leveled at me in May 2012, that “a process has been moving forward to address his [Kreneck’s] concerns” about “the status of librarians....”
 - 69 Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Policy 12.99.99.C0.03, 1-10, http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/12.99.99.C0.03_appointment_rank_and_promotion_of_professional_librarians.pdf (accessed 4/14/2017).
 - 70 *Ibid.*, 2, 10.
 - 71 *Ibid.*, 10.
 - 72 Photograph of the “Library Posse.” Image in author’s possession.

- 73 These emails to author, 2015, must remain anonymous. Documents in author's possession.
- 74 Anonymous conversation with author, 2011; Thomas H. Kreneck, "Professional assistant professors another step toward ending tenure," *Austin American-Statesman*, September 27, 2016, A9; Bruce Dunlavy, "Public Higher Education Is Not A Business," December 3, 2016, <https://agoodmantoknow.com/2016/12/03/public-higher-education-is-not-a-business/> (accessed 4/14/2017).
- 75 Texas State Senator, Wendy Davis, staged a now famous filibuster in 2013 against more restrictive abortion legislation. A progressive, she ran as the Democratic Party candidate for governor in 2014. This quote is from her keynote address on the steps of the Texas capitol at the 2017 Women's Rights march. Though this sentence dealt with the condition of women, I believe it has universal applicability.