

# Not Just Degree-Seekers

## Graduate Students As Scholarly Contributors

Roxanne Shirazi & Jill Cirasella  
The Graduate Center, CUNY

[bit.ly/notjustdegrees](https://bit.ly/notjustdegrees)

@roxanneshirazi @jillasella

# The City University of New York (CUNY)

## 24 campuses across NYC:

- 11 senior colleges
- 7 community colleges
- 1 honors college
- 5 graduate and professional schools

## Master's programs:

- Offered by multiple campuses, including the Graduate Center (GC)

## Doctoral programs:

- Until recently, offered only by GC
- Now offered by several campuses
- GC still primary doctorate-granting campus



# The Graduate Center

## What is the Graduate Center?

- Standalone graduate-only campus
- Not “graduate school” within larger campus
- ≈140 “core” faculty (incl. faculty librarians)
- ≈1800 consortial faculty

## Degree programs:

- 14 master’s programs
- 31 doctoral programs

## Culminating works:

- All doctoral programs + most master’s programs require a dissertation, thesis, or capstone project that must be deposited with the library for archiving and dissemination.

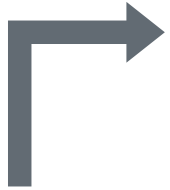
“Campus” = one large building



...in the heart of Manhattan



...in a former department store

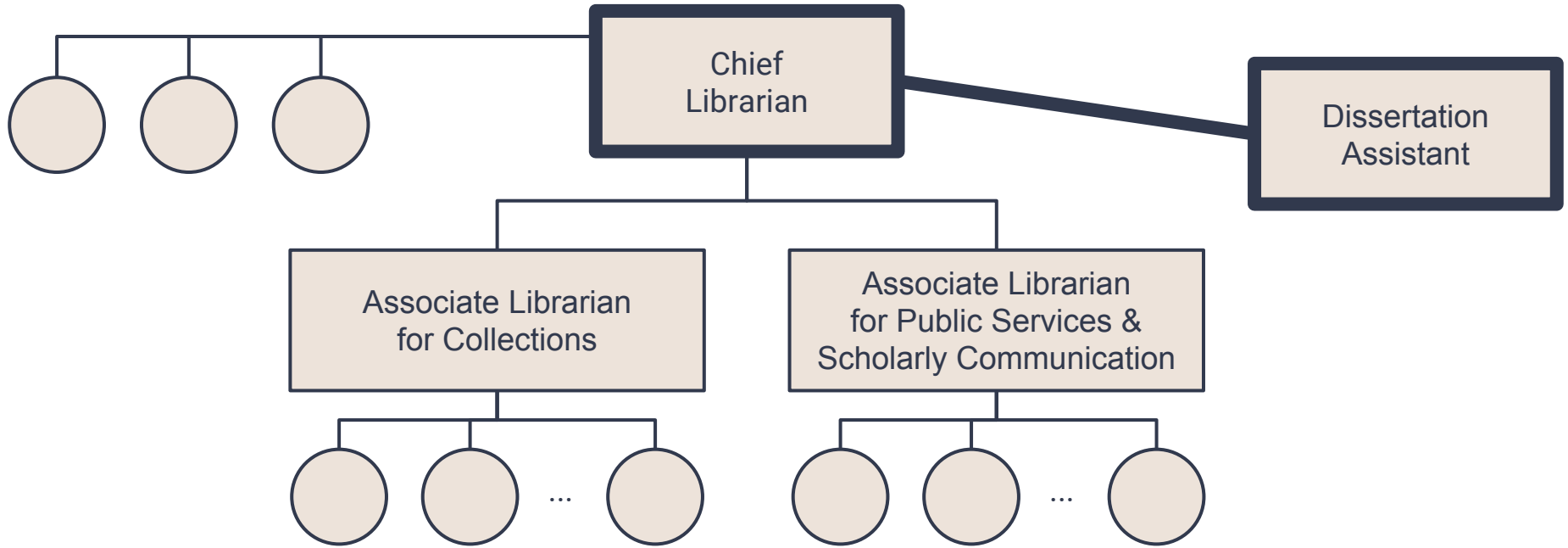


GC Library!



“Is deposit handled by the library or the graduate school?”

“Yes.”



Deposit in Library: Before



# Dissertation Assistant

- Met individually with all depositing students
- Advised students about deposit process and requirements
- Reviewed formatting and front matter of all submissions
- “Simplified a harrowing process,” creating “a happy memory”
- Delivered all electronic submissions to ProQuest and oversaw binding of all print submissions
- Maintained records for all deposited works
- ...and provided countless forms of administrative assistance to library (which had no admin. asst.)

Dissertation  
Assistant

Dissertation  
Librarian

Dissertation Research Librarian

# Getting to Yes

## Yes to Filling Vacancy ASAP:

- Multiple simultaneous vacancies, including three faculty librarian vacancies
- Couldn't fill all vacancies, but potential for flexibility in the hires we could make
- Entire campus understood the urgency of preventing a halt in the processing of culminating works

## Yes to Faculty Librarian:

Faculty and administrators were swayed by our case for librarian-level support for culminating works:

- support for research tools & methods
- expertise in copyright & licensing
- comfort with metadata, complex integrated systems, etc.
- support for digital works (beyond PDFs)

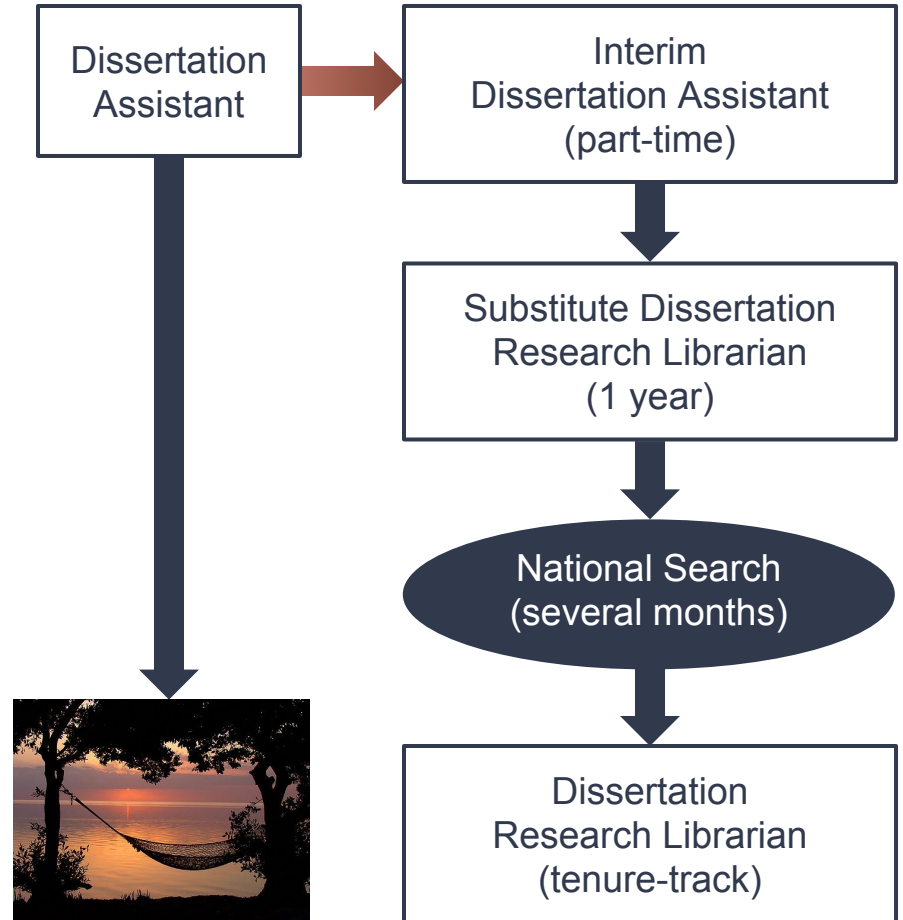
# Defining the Position

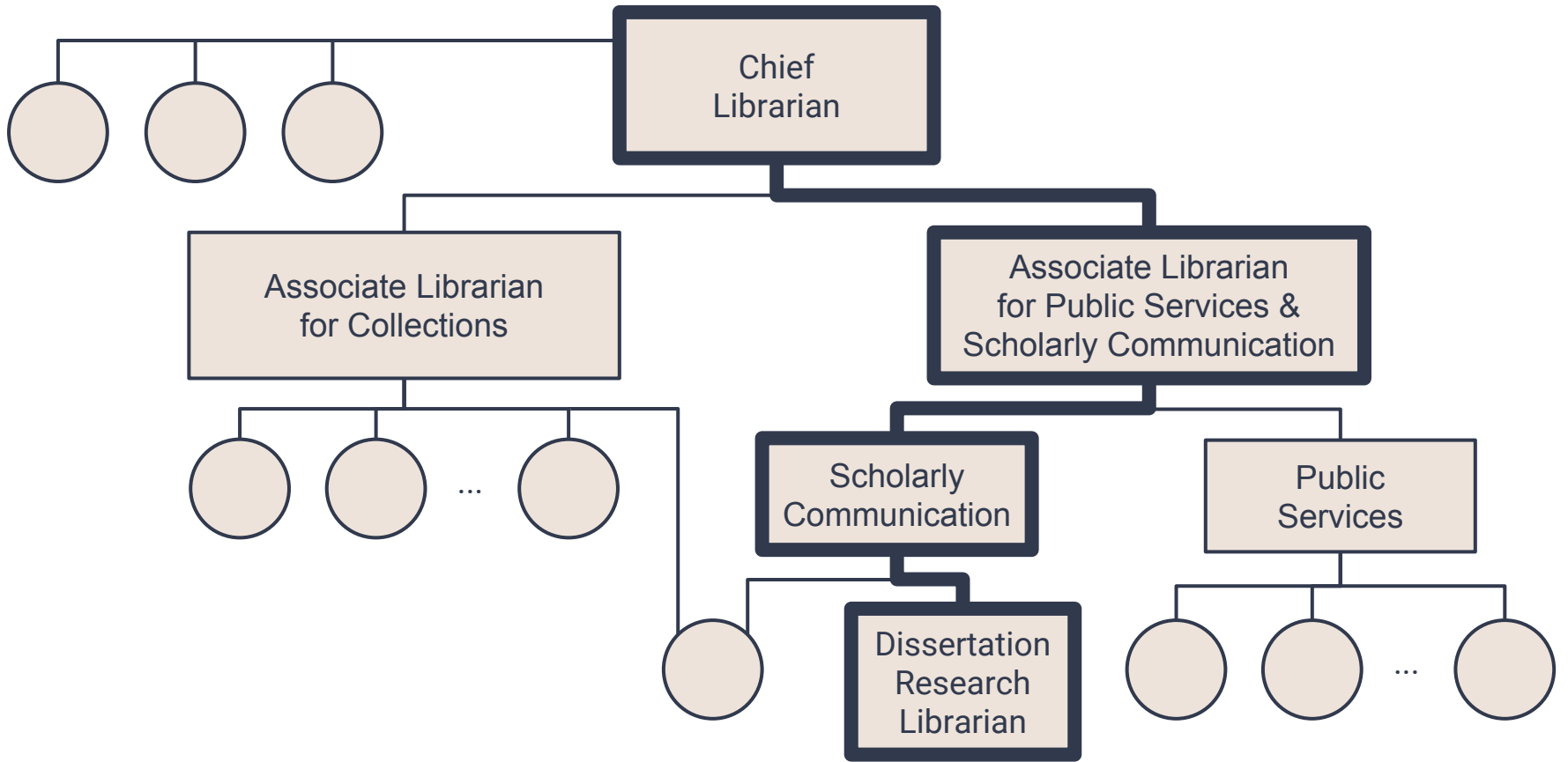
“The Dissertation Research Librarian will provide responsive, effective, and innovative coordination of the library’s collection, archiving, and distribution of dissertations, theses, and capstone projects (ETDs). The Dissertation Research Librarian also assists students and faculty in adapting to the evolving digital scholarly communication landscape.”

Responsibilities new to the position included:

- Determines best practices for ETD submission and approval
- Provides one-on-one guidance and workshop-based instruction on copyright (fair use, licensing, etc.) and tools for research management (citation management tools, file management tools, etc.)
- Formulates workflows to allow alumni to make their dissertations open access
- Consults with creators of digital/non-textual works to anticipate successful archiving of those works
- Maintains professional currency in ETD archiving, distribution, and repository management

# Avoiding a Void





Deposit in Library: After

Shifting gears



# Product

Preservation, Description, Access

# Process

Preparation, Rights, Submission

# Taking a holistic approach to ETD submission

“Manuscript preparation”  
is an opportunity  
to discuss copyright,  
fair use and author’s  
rights at a student’s  
point of need.

Also address discipline-specific concerns:

- graduates in the humanities may agonize over access embargoes
- art historians may remove crucial images entirely from their scholarship due to copyright concerns
- those in economics or biology may have signed away their copyright to previously-published articles

# Why a scholarly communication consultation?

“First-hand exposure to copyright and fair use issues, including the deposit agreement(s) students are obliged to understand, can amount to a formative authorship experience.”

Patricia Hswe, “Briefing on Copyright and Fair Use Issues in ETDs,” in [Guidance Documents for Lifecycle Management of ETDs](#) (Atlanta: Educopia Institute, 2014), 3-10.

But how?

# Challenges of the system

How to interact with students while using an online submission system?

- dedicated office hours
- group information sessions
- borrow techniques from asynchronous reference
- find allies in department staff (liaison work)

What about all the *other* questions that come with a consultation, e.g.:

- thorny citation queries;
- word processing;
- document organization;
- other formatting minutiae

How to center more substantive conversations and avoid burnout?

# Benefits

putting librarian expertise into action

# Benefits

## For Faculty + Departmental Staff

- greater awareness of author's rights, copyright issues
- streamlined processing and improved reporting
- happier students!

## For Students

- dedicated office hours\*
- group information sessions\*
- in-house expertise  
(not sent to a vendor)
- more up-to-date information

\* the solutions to our challenges were also improvements to admin practices!

# Activity (15 min)

Enough about our library—let's think about YOUR library!

Take 5-7 minutes to fill out the handout. Not sure about something? It's OK to fill in the gaps later.

We'll regroup and strategize ways to insert librarian-led scholarly communication consultations into the graduation checklist.





# Credits

[Beach Hammock](#) photo by [Royce Bair](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#).

[CUNY Graduate Center](#) photo by David Shankbone is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#).

[Empire State Building Panoramic](#) photo by Sararuizchifoni209 is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#).

[Marvelous Mrs. Maisel](#) screenshot from Season 1, Episode 5, © Amazon Content Services, LLC.

Quoted comments about Dissertation Assistant from [Judy Waldman's 28 Years of GC Service](#) blog post by Polly Thistlethwaite.