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Academic Librarianship Reflection: How Do you Define Your Roles as an Academic Librarian?

*by Rebecca Rose, Professor/Assistant Dean of Libraries, University of North Georgia
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Working as a librarian in an institution of higher education can encompass a broad range of professional roles and responsibilities. For example, librarians may teach credit-bearing courses, collaborate with faculty on assignment design, provide reference assistance, offer research consultations, lecture library instruction sessions, and so forth. Teaching can involve behind the scenes work such as cataloging and electronic resource management. The teaching role continues to evolve, with the growth of specializations such as Scholarly Communications, Data Management, OER, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, etc.

Beyond the teaching role, academic librarians engage with scholarship, develop their own research, and guide students, faculty, and staff to library resources for information discovery. Scholarship requires dissemination, so academic librarians typically present at professional conferences and publish at some level. Participation in scholarship promotes a deepening understanding of librarianship and generates knowledge creation.

Academic librarianship values service activities. Committee work at the local, state, national, or international level happens within professional organizations, the institution, the community, and in the library. Engaging in service provides ample opportunities for developing leadership skills and enables partnerships to form and thrive. Librarianship as a profession is rooted in service.

Even though the field keeps changing, supporting the attainment of student success best illustrates the mission of academic librarians. Reflecting on your role as an academic librarian can facilitate goal setting and the realization of career expectations.