

**INTRODUCTION:**

Important issues came up in a 45 minute meeting in the Director's office on September 18. We, as a department, need to address each and every one of these issues and correct the problems *now*. Otherwise, there may be serious repercussions which either the department as a whole, or people in the department, will end up facing.

Basically, what we have are serious complaints directly from staff and indirectly from faculty that were raised in the Director's office. These problems have been ongoing, but they came to a head in the past week or so, and resulted in a heated discussion. Below is a list of each of the problems which came up, followed by the procedure change which in my opinion is for the best of the department. We will institute these solutions as policy / procedural changes immediately.

**PROBLEM 1:** The first issue raised was the behavior of the community service workers, particularly in their actively engaging in gossip about members of the department (all three of us), and encouraging student workers to likewise engage in gossip. This was loud enough for professors to hear, and a couple of them complained.

**NEW POLICY 1:** Carol and I have reached an agreement that, after this group of community service workers, we will no longer use community service workers in the department.

**RATIONALE:** There is the fundamental issue of training them and then trusting them to do work that student workers or serials staff should be doing, and of simply having enough for them to do so that they do not have time to sit around and gossip.

**PROCEDURE:** We will contact Danielle today or tomorrow to let her know that we no longer wish to have community service workers. I hate to throw out the good with the bad, but in this case we have little choice. We are getting burned much too often, and their presence adds to all our workloads.

**PROBLEM 2:** The second issue raised was that of gossip itself. The witness to this gossip said that it covered all department staff, other student workers, and other library staff. This gossip apparently involved not only the community service workers, but student workers who happened to be coming in and out of the department.

**NEW POLICY 2:** All gossip and backstabbing ends immediately. We are instituting a no gossip rule in the department.

**RATIONALE:** We'd all actually have a better day if we all tried to keep each other's spirits up. So the solution I propose is simple: We (the serials staff) will set a positive example by being cordial and talking about the better parts of our day as often as possible. We will save griping sessions pertaining to Nicholls staff—the library included—for times we are not in the library. If we have to start meeting every now and then off campus to air out gripes, we will.

**NOTE:** This does not mean that we cannot talk about problems we encounter outside the library. I realize we all have lives and sometimes we need to talk about our problems. However, I would like us to keep those kinds of conversations to a minimum.

**PROCEDURE:** I will place signs all over the workroom area, and will place a flyer in each student worker's box. I do not want anyone disciplined or singled out, since the witness to this gossip would not identify the culprit specifically, but starting tomorrow, any student worker caught gossiping or backstabbing will be asked to stop once, and then be asked to take it outside the department. A third offence will result in disciplinary action. I want a written record of any time a student worker crosses this line a third time, and any times afterwards. We can no longer afford to allow anyone to run down any library staff, fellow workers, or faculty. This department is a fishbowl, and people see and hear what we do. Also, we need to remind student workers that anything we say will eventually get around, as will the fact that we are the ones who said it.

**NOTE:** I expect serials staff to hold itself to the same, if not a higher standard. We will no longer complain to student workers or other staff about problems we have with other staff, *unless the point of these complaints is to address the problem directly by working out a plan to talk to the staff member in question, and request a change of behavior.* Again, this got out of hand and either community service or student workers repeated gripes they heard in the department *in front of professors.*

**PROBLEM 3:** The third issue that was raised was actually a bi-product of the second issue discussed above. Part of the gossip that was bandied around in the presence of others had to do with computer usage. We need to be careful what we tell student workers about our own computer usage, as it can eventually be repeated, perhaps in the presence of administration. This particular issue involved the witness stating that a dating site had been accessed regularly (as related by student workers, according to this witness). This is a serious issue because such actions could get any of us into very serious trouble. I do not need to remind anyone here that recently we had a colleague called in on such issues. For the record, I stated that I had never seen such a site accessed personally, and to my knowledge no such access had ever occurred.

**RATIONALE:** University policy states that we are not to use university computers for non-work related issues, at least not while we are on the clock. This *does not* include e-mails by the way.

**PROCEDURE:** As a department, we are going to create an acceptable computer use departmental policy which will apply to both staff and student workers. We are not going to become spies or Nazis about this, but we need some basic rules about what types of non-related computer use we cannot engage in *during work hours*. I want a policy created and followed by the last day of this semester, so the three of us are going to start working on this immediately. We can start with obvious sites, such as porn, gambling, chat rooms, chat software, dating sites, etc., and work our way from there. I assume there will be fewer types of sites we cannot visit than those we can, so we will produce a “do not” list. However, we should also reference university policy, since we will be bound by it.

**NOTE:** This policy will not apply to students using the library. They are governed by library policy.

**NOTE:** We need to consult the policy’s fine print to see what a person’s rights are during break times and lunch breaks. I am minded to think that we do have some rights to use our free time as we see fit, as long as we do nothing illegal; however, we will be best served to make sure. I will spend the next few days finding out this policy, unless someone already knows it.

**PROBLEM 4:** Finally, the last issue that was raised had to do with how student workers perceive the department itself. The witness to the gossip stated that they look at the department as not being a united front, which allows them to get away with being lazy and not finishing their tasks. In other words, they see us as a joke. On this particular day, we had a very dedicated student worker who wanted to check items in, but had not been trained well in SIRSI. This lack of training, unfortunately, was paraded out in the Director's Office during the meeting.

**RATIONALE:** Having poorly trained workers of any kind makes us look bad. It's that simple. Besides, we are kidding ourselves if we think we can continue to run this department on the three person staff we currently have, given the fact that half my time is still spent doing various Reference and instructional duties, and that I have faculty duties on top of those. We absolutely have to have well-trained, disciplined student workers who accept their roles in the department as being part of a team of interchangeable hands. My own gut feeling is that we have currently six people who are willing to be helpful in this regard. We will of course need to evaluate the abilities of each individually, but we should let each work to the *best* of his or her abilities, while also working within his or her limitations. We all deserve such respect for our abilities, and we should always look to give the respect deserved by taking an optimistic attitude about what our student workers can learn; only after we see real, tangible, consistent evidence of a student worker's inability to learn a task should we deter that worker from doing that task in the future.

**PROCEDURE:** We will begin requiring each and every student worker to go through a five part training process, which will be completed in his or her first two weeks of work. The five parts will be as follows:

1. checking in on cards and into SIRSI;
2. maintaining an assigned shelf area;
3. getting and sorting the mail correctly, as described in the online manual;
4. giving brief tours of the department;
5. helping patrons with questions about printing, research, and machines.

I have already created the beginnings of an online Serials Manual for student workers. Each and every student worker, without fail, will be shown where this site is located, and asked to print out the pages, *as his or her first task*. As a precursor to this, we will spend the next week making sure these pages are updated. That way each student worker will know where to find these manual sections if need be. The training duties will be split between all three of us, meaning that when we get a new student worker, whoever is in the department and available will *prioritize* the training. To make sure each student worker is trained in every area, we will create a check off sheet for each one. That way, when one of us wants to know if a student worker has been trained in a certain task, all that staff member needs to do is look in the student worker's folder for the check sheet.

**NOTE:** Also as part of this solution we are going to do what we have been planning since we got the new security system, and create a student worker area. We will move check in cards to that area if possible. Carol stated today that she was unaware that we had not been given a wireless computer for that front desk, and that she is going to get us a wireless computer to place there for reference. We will also move all stamping and stripping materials there. This will be accomplished by close of business this Friday.

**CONCLUSION:**

What we are hoping to produce here is a happy but streamlined department, one that can run efficiently even when all three of us are unavailable. As for creating a devoted Reference Area in serials stacks, for the moment we will have to stick with Danny's use of the temporary desk. Since we cannot forward our phones to that spot, it is difficult to use it at the moment. I am going to request a nice desk which we can use for Reference from Carol, and remind her that we need a wireless computer. I am also going to ask if we can get a system set up whereby we can all forward our phones to that spot, or at least get a devoted number for Serials Reference, much like Government Documents has.

Also, as soon as the library hires on a new Reference person, I will request that I work no daytime Reference hours (in other words, I will keep my Monday night only), so that I can help staff our new Reference Desk in serials. I will probably still be asked to do instruction, however. But as usual all times I will be out will be listed on the calendar, which should be consulted any time someone—even a student worker—needs to know why I am not in the department.

Dated September 18, 2007

Signed

Anthony J. Fonseca

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Sandi Chauvin

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Danny Gorr

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