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# The Care and Feeding of Library Student Assistants

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# The Care and Feeding

## of Library Student Assistants

Cedarville University's Centennial Library has a long history of recognizing its student employees in a variety of ways. This recognition is a very important part of the library's activities, not only to show our appreciation to our student workers for what they do, but also to honor them for the excellence that they exhibit in performing their duties and for their willingness to take on a great deal of responsibility. We depend on them to keep the library running smoothly, not only during normal working hours, but especially when the full-time faculty and staff are not working in the evenings and on Saturdays. The library director, Lynn Brock, estimates that 40% of the hours that the library is open, it is staffed entirely by students, with the exception of a reference librarian.

As the university and the library grew over the years, more and more student employees were added to the library staff. Each of the library's departments tended to develop its own procedures for hiring student employees and its own policies and expectations in regard to the students' actual responsibilities and evaluations. Although the various departments had always consulted with each other informally about issues related to student employees, in the late 1990s the Director recognized the need for a more formal and comprehensive approach for dealing with these matters. He therefore instituted what is known as the Managers Council.

The Managers Council consists of six people: the Collection Services Technical Assistant (1-3 student employees), the Media Resource Center Manager (6 students), the Curriculum Materials Center Librarian (6-8 students), the Audio Visual Services Manager (10 students), and the Circulation Services Manager (22-24 students). The sixth member of the Council is the library's Office Manager, who, although she does not directly supervise students, is responsible for maintaining payroll and other financial records. One of the six members chairs

the Council each year on a rotating basis. In addition to the library student employees, we also include those students who are employed by Computer Services, but assigned to the library, in certain parts of our recognition program. Computer Services employees include 1-2 students who work in the library's Language Lab and 6-12 students who work in the Media Resource Center's Computer Lab. The MRC manager is responsible for maintaining records on these students. Thus, the total number of student employees who are involved in at least some aspect of the recognition program can be anywhere from 52-65, but usually averages around 56.

One of the initial charges to the Managers Council was to develop a Managers Manual and a Student Assistant Manual. The Managers Manual was originally a compilation of all the student employee-related documents that each manager had developed and accumulated over the years. Now, it is a more cohesive document that deals with employment procedures, evaluation, the awards program, and many other issues relating to student employees. The Student Assistant Manual, required reading for the student employees, is a general introduction to library policies, procedures, and expectations. (Each department has its own manual or set of guidelines that is more specific to its own student employees.) The Managers Council reviews the Managers Manual and the Student Assistant Manual each year and edits them to reflect any changes in policies or procedures.

### The Care of Library Student Assistants

The Care of Library Student Assistants focuses on the five components of the library's awards plan: the pay scale, service-based awards, the graduation gift, the Top Scholar Award, and the Student Outstanding Achievement Recognition, or SOAR, Award. Some of these awards are based on length of service, and the student must have worked at least half of any semester for that semester to count toward

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### ABSTRACT

Cedarville University's Centennial Library has a long history of recognizing its student employees in a variety of ways. The Care and Feeding of Library Student Assistants will discuss the library's pay scale, service-based and other awards, and the various social functions planned for its Student Assistants throughout the year. All of these activities are administered by the library's Managers Council, and the duties and role of the Council will also be explained.

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the awards. This applies to the pay scale as well. Generally, the managers attempt to hire students during the last month of a semester so that they can be fully trained and ready to begin work at the beginning of the next semester.

The first component of the awards program is the pay scale. All library Student Assistants begin at \$6.00 per hour, a pay rate that is very competitive with other campus jobs. They are given a \$.25 per hour raise after each two semesters worked. Circulation Desk Shift Leaders, who have a great deal of added responsibility, and the Student Supervisors in the Media Resource Center and Curriculum Materials Center are paid an extra \$.50 per hour. The highest possible rate of pay at the moment, assuming summer employment in the library, is \$7.50 per hour. This pay scale applies only to library employees, as the Computer Services department has its own pay scale.

The next component is the service-based awards, of which there are four. After two semesters of work, students are given one of their most coveted awards, the Centennial Library mug. This mug is given only to student employees. After four semesters of work, students are awarded a key chain engraved with their choice of first name or initials. There are different style key chains for male and female students. After six semesters of work, students are given an engraved clock. Again, the students may select from several different styles. After eight semesters, students are given a \$30 gift certificate to the university bookstore or to Barnes and Noble.

The third component is the graduation gift. Upon graduation, regardless of the number of semesters worked in the library, the seniors are given a Cedarville University portfolio engraved with their full name or initials. The service-based awards and the graduation gift are given both to Centennial Library and Computer Services employees.

The fourth component of the awards program is the Top Scholar Award. This award is given each year to the graduating senior library employee with the highest grade point average. Computer Services employees are not eligible for this award, which is an engraved

Bible. In addition, a book in the recipient's major is added to the library collection, with a bookplate attached to the inside of the book honoring that student's achievement.

The last component is the SOAR Award. In 2005, the Director instituted the Staff Achievement and Recognition, or STAR, Award for library faculty and staff. Wanting to honor our student employees in a similar way, he asked the Managers Council to develop criteria for a new student award, which the council named the Student Outstanding Achievement Recognition, or SOAR, Award. This award is given at the library's spring recognition banquet. The criteria for this award states that "the award is presented to a Student Assistant who demonstrates leadership, creativity, service, initiative, or performance that exceeds the normal expectations of the job description." As with the Top Scholar Award, only library employees are eligible for this award, which is presented as warranted, not necessarily annually. The award includes the addition of the student's name to a permanent plaque which hangs in the library's administrative offices and an engraved soaring eagle statuette.

### **The Feeding of Library Student Assistants**

Each year, the Centennial Library holds a retreat for all its student employees on the Friday before classes begin. The retreat offers our first opportunity to express our appreciation through the Feeding of Library Student Assistants. Briefly, the library retreat includes collective morning meetings with the entire Student Assistant staff and afternoon departmental meetings. The library pays for or provides all meals prior to the start of the university meal contract, and we also arrange for early dorm move-in for the students who are living on campus. The day begins with a breakfast provided by the library faculty and staff. The menu generally includes home-made egg casseroles, potato casseroles, and French toast, as well as pastries, fruit, and assorted beverages. Lunch is usually purchased from a local restaurant, and includes sandwiches, salads, cookies, and beverages.

Our next function, the fall cookout, usually occurs about six weeks into the semester in early October. The cookout is held between 7:30 and 10:00 on a Sunday evening at the home of one of the librarians. Transportation is arranged for students without cars, and the food is again provided by the library faculty and staff. We usually serve hot dogs, Sloppy Joes, salads, desserts, chips, and beverages. All of the set-up and clean-up is done by library faculty and staff. All library, Computer Lab, and Language Lab student assistants are invited, as are the library's faculty and staff and their families. In addition to the food and fellowship, we have a bonfire for the students to enjoy.

The Christmas Goody Bags are a highlight of the year, not only for the students who receive them, but also for the library faculty and staff who provide the goodies. About three weeks before the end of the fall semester, a sign-up list is posted in a staff member's office, and all library faculty and staff are encouraged to bring something for the goody bags on the Monday of finals week. Many of the items are home-made, which is especially appreciated by the students. Paper bags are spread out around the break room, and several people (not just Managers Council members) place the items in the bags. Goody bags are given to the library Student Assistants and to the Computer Services student employees who work in the library, as well as to the UPS driver, the campus mail delivery person, the OhioLINK (ILL) driver, and sometimes to the custodians. In 2005, we distributed 60 goody bags.

The final event of the year is the annual Library Recognition Dinner, held a few weeks before the end of the spring semester. There are usually 85-90 people in attendance at the dinner. All library faculty and staff and their spouses, library Student Assistants, Language Lab and Computer Lab Assistants, and special guests are invited. Special guests often include the recipients of the library scholarship, which is awarded to graduating seniors, or graduates within the last two years, who will be entering library school. These scholarship recipients do not necessarily have to be current library Student Assistants. Following the dinner, all of the awards mentioned in the first part of this article are distributed, as are the scholarships and any special commendations that the Director wishes to make.

In summary, the faculty and staff of the Centennial Library look forward each year to honoring our students in the ways outlined in this article. The Managers Council sees these tasks as among its most important duties, and it is our belief that our student employees definitely enjoy and appreciate the ways in which we express our gratitude to them for a job well done. †

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