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Academic Law Librarians Are Paid 47% Less Than Their Faculty Counterparts

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Academic Law Librarians Are Paid 47% Less Than Their Faculty Counterparts

Posted on February 4, 2022 by Olivia Smith Schlinck



Joe Fore
@Joe_Fore

...

After @aznchew and @HanksKendyl raised good points/questions about TT vs. #legalwriting salaries, I did some internet research on several "peer" public schools: UVA, UT, UM, & UCLA. The results?

Avg. TT *starting* salary: \$173K

Avg. salary for *all LRW faculty*: \$111K

10:46 PM · Dec 20, 2021 · Twitter Web App

15 Retweets 13 Quote Tweets 74 Likes



In December Joe Fore, the co-director of the Legal Writing program at the University of Virginia School of Law, [posted to Twitter a thread comparing tenure track and legal writing salaries](#). In comparing four public schools, he discovered that the average starting salary for a tenure track professor was \$173,000 while the average salary for *all* legal writing faculty was \$111,000. A few academic law librarians saw the tweet and replied that someone should do the same for law librarians, too.

Soon after, I started gathering and analyzing the salaries of all librarians and full-time faculty at 20 public schools where law librarians teach a required, for-credit class. I used public law schools for this data collection because their salary data is (almost always) available online. This amounted to 876 individuals – 100 librarians and 776 faculty members – with salary information for 791 of those same individuals. A language note: I'm using the word "faculty" to describe non-librarian instructors even if librarians are designated "faculty" at a particular institution. "Faculty" as I am using it includes legal writing and clinical faculty.

A summary of my findings; all salaries and percentages are rounded to the nearest dollar or whole percent:

- Excluding library directors and law school deans, the average librarian salary was \$84,740 and the average faculty member salary was \$159,995 – a difference of \$75,255. Put differently, **non-director librarians make about 47% less than non-dean faculty**.
- The average law librarian salary *including* the library director was \$102,316, and the average faculty member salary, *including* law school deans, was \$166,115 – a difference of \$63,799, meaning **all law librarians**

make about 38% less than law faculty.

- The difference is smaller when comparing all librarians (including directors) to other more discrete categories: librarians make about **8% less than legal writing faculty**, about **21% less than clinical faculty**, and about **9% less than those faculty with the title “Assistant Professor.”**
- Librarians make about **18% less than those faculty with the title “Associate Professor.”**
- The average salary of a full professor – “Professor of Law” – is \$180,894; **law librarians make 43% less than a “Professor of Law.”**
- The CUNY School of Law in New York City pays its librarians, on average, slightly *more* than all faculty – 5% more when including deans and the library director, and 0.5% more when excluding them.
- The University of New Mexico and University of Hawaii had the smallest disparities (15% and 16%, respectively) when comparing all librarians (including the director) and all faculty (including deans). Those numbers increase to 22% for the University of New Mexico and 31% for the University of Hawaii when the library director and deans are excluded.
- The most extreme salary disparities are at the University of Indiana (McKinney), where law librarians (including the director) make, on average, 58% less than their faculty counterparts, and the University of Georgia, where law librarians (including the director) make, on average, 57% less than their faculty counterparts. When excluding the library director and dean, the University of California (Irvine) is the worst offender; there, law librarians make, on average, 63% less than their faculty counterparts.

Clearly, academic law librarians are being severely underpaid, an affront made worse when you remember that most, if not all, law librarians in a teaching role are required to have both a Juris Doctorate *and* a Master’s degree; [according to the 2021 AALL Salary Survey](#), 63.2% of all academic law librarians and 85% of those with the title “instructional” librarian hold both degrees. Dual degrees are not required of doctrinal faculty, although some may have L.L.M. or PhD degrees. Another consideration: many faculty are on a 9-month contract, whereas librarians tend to work all year ‘round, thus further widening the pay gap. I did not account for this difference in the data, but it would be interesting to see the effect this would have.



Tiffany Jeffers
@LawProfTJ



Replying to @Joe_Fore @aznchew and @HanksKendyl

Joe, it’s because TT profs are responsible for teaching, scholarship, & service; and LRW profs are responsible for teaching, scholarship, & service. So, there are clearly delineated job differentials that justify these salary gaps.

10:05 PM · Dec 21, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

2 Retweets 63 Likes



In the original Twitter thread, [Tiffany Jeffers of Georgetown Law jokingly replied](#): “it’s because TT profs are responsible for teaching, scholarship, & service; and LRW profs are responsible for teaching, scholarship, & service. So, there are clearly delineated job differentials that justify these salary gaps.” I intentionally chose to

look at the salaries of those librarians who teach a *required class* to law students. Jeffers' point rings true to law librarians, many of whom publish and serve on university or law school committees in addition to their teaching duties.

I've been working on this project for several weeks now and found myself getting angrier with each new updated average. I've tried – and largely failed – to channel that anger into action, into a *solution*, and find myself frustrated at the heavy lift required by our options. Those options? **Seek tenure or unionize.**

I did not have the time to determine which of the 20 schools I studied grant their librarians tenure and/or have unions, and so I cannot compare the salary disparity on that basis. (I do know from experience that at CUNY Law librarians are on the tenure track *and* unionized, and that CUNY is the only school without a disparity).

Both unions and tenure offer a host of benefits that many do not currently have: higher salaries, job security, [academic freedom](#). Tenure may offer a boost in status or prestige and could give librarians voting rights in faculty meetings. Unions offer collective bargaining and better fringe benefits.

A law school that entrusts the teaching of important, required content cannot justify such a drastic pay disparity between librarians and those faculty members teaching other skills or doctrinal courses. Law librarians have talked around and about pay gaps long enough – it is past time for change. Be it seeking tenure or considering unionization or some other strategy, academic librarians need a massive wage increase **now**.

Some methodology notes:

To prevent any attempted justification of lower librarian salaries because of teaching differences, I included only those public law schools ranked 1-150 where librarians teach a required, for-credit class. I included co-teaching a Legal Research & Writing course in the list if the librarian was listed as a professor in the course information, which is why the University of South Carolina was included by schools like Louisiana State University were excluded. The schools studied were:

1. University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law
2. University of California Irvine School of Law
3. CUNY School of Law
4. University of Florida Levin College of Law
5. University of Georgia School of Law
6. Georgia State University College of Law
7. University of Hawai'i at Mānoa William S. Richardson School of Law
8. University of Idaho College of Law
9. University of Illinois College of Law
10. Indiana University Maurer School of Law
11. University of Kentucky J. David Rosenberg College of Law
12. University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law
13. University of New Hampshire Franklin Pierce School of Law
14. University of New Mexico School of Law
15. Ohio State University Moritz College of Law

16. University of Oklahoma College of Law
17. University of South Carolina School of law
18. University of South Dakota Knudson School of Law
19. University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law
20. West Virginia University College of Law

I omitted some public schools that fall under the above criteria. Both Pennsylvania State University locations (Dickinson and University Park) have a required, for-credit legal research class, but I was unable to locate current salary information for those schools. The University of Pittsburgh had salaries available, but I could not locate salaries for the librarians, so I removed the school to avoid skewed data. I did the same with the University of Mississippi. I omitted the Universities of Wyoming and Montana because they only had 1 librarian teaching the for-credit class. Lastly, I excluded any faculty designated emerita and did not include adjuncts.

Salary information was obtained through public websites, mostly [Open Payrolls](#), which allows you to search for the salary of state employees by name. I created a spreadsheet of the salary information and will make it available to anyone who requests it.

An important and obvious flaw in the data: most of the salary information is from 2020, but data for 5 schools is from 2021, and data from 1 school is from 2022 because the salary database was updated in real-time. 2021 salaries did not appear to be vastly different from 2020 salaries (and anecdotally, many universities did not give pay raises between 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic).

This entry was posted in [Career, employment & reference librarians](#), [Issues in Law Librarianship](#), [Issues in Librarianship \(generally\)](#), [Legal Research Instruction](#), [Teaching \(general\)](#) and tagged [law school pay gap](#), [legal research](#), [legal writing](#), [pay disparity](#), [pay gap](#), [salaries](#), [salary](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

16 Responses to *Academic Law Librarians Are Paid 47% Less Than Their Faculty Counterparts*



Anonymous says:

February 4, 2022 at 4:40 pm

I'm a librarian at one of the schools studied. I'm tenure track, given little support in meeting tenure obligations, and if successful it will raise my salary to \$10,000 less than an entry level writing instructor instead of \$13,000 less.

[Reply](#)



Olivia Smith Schlinck says:

February 10, 2022 at 2:03 pm

Oh, yikes. That could be a good argument against the tenure-track route. I wish you luck on future salary and employment negotiations!

[Reply](#)



Anonymous says:

February 7, 2022 at 12:06 pm

I have tenure. I am unionized. I still make almost half of what my doctrinal and clinical colleagues make. I can't afford to pay my children's tuitions. I am not paid enough to survive.

[Reply](#)



Olivia Smith Schlinck says:

February 10, 2022 at 2:04 pm

This is awful, I am so sorry that your institution has put you in this position. So much of the solution depends on getting university administration to recognize what a living wage is, which feels like an impossible task. Solidarity.

[Reply](#)



Mary Whisner says:

February 8, 2022 at 2:04 pm

Labor economics is a complex field. These data points are worth gathering and are very interesting, but they don't tell the whole story.

There's a different market for "person with JD to teach Civil Procedure and Federal Courts" than for "person with JD to teach legal research." To some extent, both markets are national. The Civ Pro professor gets a higher salary is that she may have had offers from three other schools that are offering \$150,000—or maybe she's coming from a Supreme Court clerkship and two years at a Wall Street law firm and that boosts the range the dean can present to the provost. A reference librarian who will teach legal research might also have a few offers—but none of the other schools will be offering something like what they offer Civ Pro profs.

[Reply](#)



Mary Whisner says:

February 8, 2022 at 2:12 pm

Librarians who teach offer value to law schools. But so do librarians who catalog, manage complex licensing, answer reference questions, run institutional repositories, and so on.

I worry about creating tiers of librarians — those who teach and the rest.

I've never taught a required class (although I've done many guest presentations), but have the privilege of having a JD and other qualifications similar to teaching faculty. I identify as a librarian and feel solidarity with my colleagues who did not go to law school—as well as with colleagues who did not go to the law schools that are feeder schools for law faculties.

[Reply](#)



Mary Whisner says:

February 8, 2022 at 2:30 pm

From time to time I have looked at my state's salary information. <https://fiscal.wa.gov/Salaries.aspx> It can make you crazy to look at it too much. Look beyond librarian vs. faculty. Looking within faculty, why is this productive, hard-working, kind professor paid so much less than that lazy, rude professor? Why is a career counselor paid more or less than a budget specialist? How can the administrative assistants and secretaries afford to live in this city?

Beyond the law school, why are law professors paid so darn much more than professors who teach liberal arts? Instead of concluding that legal writing professors and librarians who teach are paid too little, we could conclude that law professors are paid too much.

Years ago, I heard a law professor grumbling that graduates going off to big firms were getting high salaries than his. I wasn't too sympathetic. I wondered whether the professor would want the life of those first- and second-year associates. Could he

bill the hours they're required to bill? Doesn't he find teaching to be more pleasant and engaging than working as an associate? Wouldn't he rather write an article that he's interested in than work on whatever a partner says?

[Reply](#)



Mary Whisner says:

February 8, 2022 at 2:44 pm

If we were behind Rawls's veil of ignorance, what sort of compensation scheme would we devise? Would we pay the football coach fifty times as much as we pay a nurse in the university hospital?

In the law school, I wouldn't pay doctrinal law faculty scads more than skills faculty (writing, research, clinic). But I think I would also flatten the whole structure, boosting support staff compared with professional staff.

It makes sense to pay a premium to people with professional degrees for which they likely had to borrow huge sums. (But should the lucky grad whose grandparents paid for law school get that same premium?)

I'm well aware of my privilege in having gone to law school when the price tags were smaller. I was able to pay off my debt in 11 years. (And thank you to AALL and others who gave me scholarships for my MLIS.) (By the way, if you have some spare money—i.e., you aren't still crawling out from your mountain of student loans—consider sharing your good fortune with a scholarship fund. I do.)

I'm approaching the stage where TIAA matters more than my salary. To those of you who are younger, keep on fighting the good fight. Good luck moving the system in a more equitable direction.

[Reply](#)



Olivia Smith Schlinck says:

February 10, 2022 at 2:10 pm

Thank you for your insightful comments, Mary! I appreciate your viewpoint here. I understand the concern about creating tiers of librarians, especially on the basis of those who teach versus those who don't. On the whole, all librarians are undoubtedly underpaid and need a raise. My decision to look only at those who teach was made from a bargaining perspective, where advocating for a raise for librarians by comparing apples to apples (or, maybe apples to pears) would make it more likely administration would agree with these concerns.

I agree that (some) law professors are paid too much, but I don't think that negates the fact that librarians are paid too little. Most of the non-tenured faculty in the law school are paid too little, especially in big cities with skyrocketing costs of living. Flattening the structure and boosting the salaries of support staff is an excellent addition to this conversation. Thank you again!

[Reply](#)



Anonymous says:

February 10, 2022 at 1:18 pm

Faculty are not my counterparts. I am a staff member and a proud librarian. Faculty are doing a completely different role and deserve to be paid more. This question is needlessly provocative and divisive.

[Reply](#)



Olivia Smith Schlinck says:

February 10, 2022 at 2:46 pm

Respectfully, I do not think that pointing out a massive pay differential between groups of workers is divisive. Provocative, yes. Provocative was one of my goals in publishing this post: to raise awareness among my fellow law librarians and provide them the incentive and ammunition needed to get a raise.

I, too, am a proud staff member and proud librarian, which is precisely why I am outraged that my colleagues and I are underpaid by such a drastic amount. Even if it follows that faculty “deserve” to be paid more – and there is certainly an argument against this line of thinking – I do not accept that faculty deserve to be paid double or more than other professionals working amongst them, just like I do not think that billionaire CEOs like Jeff Bezos deserve to be paid 50x more than their workers.

Librarians, some commenting on this post, have shared that they are so underpaid that they struggle to pay their bills or support their children. Do we just accept this as a reality because faculty have a different role and deserve to be paid more for that role? Is that not a divisive stance to take?

[Reply](#)

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