Title

Avoiding freezer burn: Before, during, and after of a hiring freeze

Author(s)

Rupp-Serrano, Karen

Citation for Final Version

The article was first published in the following form:

Rupp-Serrano, Karen. "Avoiding Freezer Burn: Before, during, and after of a Hiring Freeze." Interim Leadership in Libraries: Building Relationships, Making Decisions, and Moving On, edited by Jennifer E. Knieval and Leslie J Reynolds, Association of College and Research Libraries, Chicago, IL, 2022, pp. 141–156.

Link for This Version

https://hdl.handle.net/11244/335541

Repository Statement

Feedback Form

Avoiding Freezer Burn:

Before, During, and After of a Hiring Freeze

Karen Rupp-Serrano

Professor and Associate Dean of Libraries, University of Oklahoma

Introduction

Sometimes we may feel that the hiring process is a burden as it requires the crafting of position descriptions, posting job openings, recruiting, interviewing, checking references, etc. But when a hiring freeze is imposed, we long to have that burden on our shoulders again. Personnel are arguably our most precious resource, a wellspring of fresh ideas and organizational flexibility.

As an interim leader, one may feel particularly challenged in the face of a hiring freeze and believe that permanent leadership in the institution has the inside track at such a time. In reality, a freeze applies pretty much equally across the institution, and whether the leader is permanent or interim, they face the same challenges and use many of the same strategies to address those challenges. Indeed, a library may have more strategies to employ than a traditional academic department, where faculty have academic specializations and are not easily reassigned and the number of non-faculty personnel available to handle the myriad departmental activities in support of the department's teaching responsibilities are frequently quite minimal. As an interim library leader, one is not alone; the interim library leader has personnel with a range of expertise that can be utilized to generate options related to the freeze, to develop and implement plans to address shortages, and more.

Before a Hiring Freeze

Before a hiring freeze is implemented, key organizational personnel will probably have a sense that a freeze is likely. At the University of Oklahoma, we have been in and out of hiring freezes—"hard" and "not so hard"—for some time; we have quite a bit of experience to draw on. We usually start addressing a likely freeze by applying strategy ABC: (Almost) Always Be Cooperative. The organization's chief personnel administrator should be consistently striving for a good working relationship with the parent institution's human resources department; that working relationship means the library has an organizational ear to the ground and can hear the freeze rumblings before the announcement occurs. It also means that individual has the inside track to understanding what human resources personnel look for in a successful request to post a position and can tailor what is submitted to human resources accordingly. The library's chief personnel administrator should cultivate an extensive network of similar administrators across the parent institution, learning from peer successes and struggles, and vice versa.

The organization's chief financial administrator, sometimes the same person as the personnel administrator, will have seen the budgetary warning signs that also signal likely belt-tightening activities. Knowing that, along with the chief personnel administrator, these positions can make sure the organization swings into rapid pre-freeze action—and in prioritized order. The first priority is pushing the searches closest to completion into job offers and acceptances; if a hiring freeze lands while a job offer has been extended, most institutions do not want to rescind an offer. It reflects poorly on the institution and can damage its reputation, making it more difficult to successfully recruit when hiring is once again possible. Next in order is pushing current job postings to interviews, offers, and acceptances. And finally, pushing to get open positions posted so that the organization has a chance to complete the hiring process before the freeze begins. Remember, even if the organization doesn't get to fill every opening, it can be advantageous to have had positions posted so that when the freeze is lifted, they can be leveraged to speed up renewed hiring efforts. One final piece of advice: when a hiring freeze is implemented, make sure the library is seen as a good team player. Ascertain what job postings will and won't be allowed to continue now that the freeze has been announced or is in place, and cooperate fully with human resources on shutting down those postings that won't be allowed to continue.

During the most recent hiring freeze—a rapid and "hard" freeze related to COVID-19 budgetary concerns with little to no wiggle room for slipping in job postings—the University of Oklahoma Libraries heard the pre-freeze rumblings about two weeks before the official announcement was made. We moved swiftly to determine what might be allowed. Would we have the ability to interview or make a job offer for currently posted positions? The answer came back loud and

clear: no and no. We did successfully receive approval to hire a position for which a job offer had been extended and accepted. Two positions that were posted but not yet at the offer stage were shut down.

In this situation, our interim dean at that time was in no better or worse shape than other deans on campus. The only units allowed to hire once the freeze was in place were ones where, like us, a job offer had been made and accepted, where the hire was considered essential to meet the university's teaching mission, or where the unit directly supported the shift to online course delivery. While the freeze was a blow to the interim dean, the library administrative team, and the organization, we all recognized that a freeze was much easier to accommodate than furloughs or reductions in force. Better to go without positions where we had already made accommodations due to being short-staffed than to have to reduce the salaries of staff who frequently live paycheck-to-paycheck or deliver a pink slip to a team member during a devastating economic downturn.

During a Hiring Freeze

During a hiring freeze, there are multiple avenues an organization can pursue to both meet present needs and prepare for when the freeze is rescinded. Start with shoring up organizational operations. Reach out to managers to determine the most pressing needs and the core services that are needed to keep functioning. While those core services are likely not different from any other time, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how priorities can be changed with little warning. In March 2020, how many libraries would have expected to not have buildings open and materials circulating for months? Many organizations already have business continuity plans in place that can assist with this analysis.

Having determined those core operations, the organization also now has a sense of what operations can cease to be conducted altogether in order to stretch human resources further and what workflows might be revised to rely on fewer employees. Managers should advise as to whether there are operations that could be pared back—offered on fewer days, for example, or with fewer bells and whistles—to reduce the impact on remaining staff. They can also identify possible delays in some areas that could be implemented until staffing improves again.

These activities should provide some organizational slack that can be reallocated to shore up core services and meet the most pressing needs so that an organization can continue to serve its community. For example, during the COVID hiring freeze, the University of Oklahoma Libraries lost a staff member in one of our special collections. Normally, that would be a pressing need because we are already leanly staffed in that particular unit. During COVID, however, covering for that empty position was a moot point. Special collections were not open to the public, and personnel only visited on site every few days to make sure no facilities issues were arising. An ILL position was also lost; with no ability to be

on site for several months, a decision was made to shift essential ILL tasks among the remaining staff and, like nearly all our peers, we moved to fulfill only those requests that could be met from our online collections. Pulling materials from our print collections, while users would have appreciated it, was not allowed due to campus closure. ILL staff chafed at the inability to meet user needs but also appreciated that the library was not open and that they did not have to risk their health in order to do their work.

These activities also allow an interim leader to learn about their administrative team and middle managers. One can quickly find out where institutional memory resides and who can be counted on to search the literature or deliver an environmental scan. The interim leader learns who thinks rapidly and who needs more time to process, who requires structure for a task and who can wing it, who's a linchpin and who's a nominee for best-supporting actor.

Strategies

Following these activities, it's time to turn attention to cross-training. With a hiring freeze in place, there are openings that won't be filled and new openings that will occur as some employees decide to leave the organization. In organizational units with multiple employees, cross-training is, as a rule, not terribly problematic. An effective organization probably already has quite a bit of this cross-training in place, either because employees have advanced into new positions but still know how to do the work in their previous position or because the unit has already dealt with employee absences related to short- or long-term leave, employees resigning or retiring, and similar gaps. Furthermore, organizational units probably have developed significant documentation of processes and training materials as a result of the aforementioned.

The bigger challenge is cross-training for thinly staffed units. This requires more creativity. Call upon organizational unit heads and determine where there is likely staff that could be tapped to fill in. Which of those employees would be the best match to cross-train with the thinly staffed unit? At the University of Oklahoma, for example, we have found that personnel in acquisitions and interlibrary loan have very similar skill sets and can be effectively cross-trained to provide support and backup during times when positions are empty, whether due to a hiring freeze or simply because an employee has left one of those units. Both units acquire materials not currently in the library's collections to meet the identified needs of users. Both units must be able to verify that the items they have identified for acquisition match the items being requested; they must be superior bibliographic sleuths. For this very reason, we currently have one acquisitions employee who spends up to ten hours per week assisting interlibrary loan, which regularly is understaffed because it relies, in part, on student employees who graduate or accept other positions. We have also cross-trained with library

systems by training employees in our off-site storage facility to handle specific portions of the tasks associated with loading barcodes into the software used to track library inventory in that facility, and we have trained interlibrary loan personnel to create new queues in ILLiad interlibrary loan software or change ILL webforms.

In all cross-training activities, make sure that documentation is developed and maintained. While documentation is always important—it certainly makes rapid redeployment of personnel easier—it is essential when an organization is undertaking cross-training. Documentation is the first line of defense. It provides the person being trained with what they need to handle the basics; it should help limit their initial questions to clarifications, and later to address situations that are out of the ordinary. At the University of Oklahoma, the COVID-related hiring freeze mentioned above and the need to keep employees productive actually resulted in an increase in documentation. All those employee manuals that had not been edited to reflect new or revised practices were brought up to date. Courses were created and launched in the campus learning management system to train student employees and cross-train full-time employees. In this respect, OU's most recent hiring freeze was an anomaly. Most times when there is a hiring freeze, there aren't enough bodies to go around. In this instance, a number of tasks normally performed by staff could not be performed during campus closure, and so documentation efforts benefitted.

Documentation may have an added benefit at the administrative level. The interim dean may find a scan of documentation useful in their onboarding process, assisting them in quickly getting a sense of the impacts of a freeze. While in a large library an interim dean or director may find that activity a bit too much "in the weeds," in a smaller library it may be quite useful. And even in a large library, an interim appointment may have follow-on effects throughout the administrative team. For example, at the University of Oklahoma, we had an interim dean from July 2018 through May 2021. For 2018 through June 2020, the interim dean was a former library associate dean. He retained some of his associate dean duties when he assumed the interim role but handed others off; those of us who took the handoff could rely on documentation to assist us in coming up to speed. In the summer of 2020, that entire process was repeated when I stepped in as interim dean from an associate dean position. And within three months, one of our associate deans left, other members of the leadership team took on additional unit responsibilities as a result, and again documentation was available to assist those individuals.

Cross-training and documentation are two steps to meet needs during a hiring freeze, but other activities can be undertaken during the freeze to prepare for the day when hiring will once again be allowed. One such activity is to document what work is being delayed or not performed due to the inability to hire, and

the impact on end-users and the larger institutional goals. Perhaps there is no original cataloging being pursued because the work effort of personnel in that unit has been reassigned to meet other needs. Be able to state how many materials are sitting on shelves awaiting the expert attention of an employee. Maybe the organization is not acquiring materials from specific vendors because doing so requires a specialized skill set, such as a particular language expertise, that is unavailable due to personnel reassignments. For example, note how stopping the acquisition of Arabic materials means the Arabic flagship on campus does not have access to materials needed for teaching and research. Perhaps the time materials take to move from ordering, through processing, into a user's hands has been slowed down because a particular position that lies within that workflow has been frozen, and thus the organization applies fewer personnel hours to that workflow as a result. Demonstrate how much longer that process is than normal; the organization is less efficient as a result, and end-users that have come to rely on the timely provision of resources for classes or grants are frustrated by these delays. Maybe a unit was in the midst of some special projects—projects designed to make it easier for end-users to determine how many simultaneous users are supported for each ebook, or when the license for a particular video streaming license is in force—and those projects have been abandoned to keep core services functioning. Documenting this and being able to demonstrate the impact on both end-users and the larger institutional goals will be useful when the time comes to make the case for filling frozen positions.

Another activity to be pursued during a hiring freeze is researching peer and aspirational peer libraries. The purpose of this activity is to be better able to benchmark your organization. This activity has benefits in the short term, collecting a vital piece of information that can be important when seeking to fill open positions after the hiring freeze ends, and in the long term, when the information can be used to consider how units could be reorganized for greater efficiency, where additional cross-training opportunities might reside, and to identify tasks your organization is doing that appear to no longer be performed by peers, as well as tasks the units in your organization are *not* doing that should be considered, if appropriate. If one sits in the interim chair long enough, there will be opportunities to act on what is learned and to encourage library administrative team members or middle managers to do so; or the information can be utilized by the new organizational leader.

Researching peer libraries can provide essential data points to underpin future requests to fill empty positions, reclassify employees, restructure positions or workflows, or create entirely new positions should an opportunity arise. Figure 1 provides an example of how extensive library benchmarking data was prepared at the University of Oklahoma; the position being sought received an exemption from a hiring freeze for a professional librarian position. Please note that in this

and the following examples, the information collected for use by OU Libraries human resources (HR) is not the final information that was provided to the main campus HR department. We collect more data than is generally sent forward for the freeze exemption process. This allows the library HR team to craft whatever document they determine will be most successful based on their knowledge of what campus HR is seeking in the process at any given time; processes do evolve, after all. It also gives the library HR team additional data that can be rapidly provided to campus HR if they request additional information about the position or the unit in which it operates.

> **How does this position meet the critical needs of the university?**
> This position contributes to the University of Oklahoma's goal of educational affordability by managing programs and services that reduce the cost of textbooks for OU students. Since the position was created in 2014, the programs managed by the Open Education Coordinator, particularly the Alternative Textbook Grant, have saved OU students $2.6 million in displaced textbook costs. The position's programs and services are on track to save OU students $3 million by 2020.
>
> **If we did not fill this position, what other strategies would we have to meet the needs?**
> If we are unable to fill this position, we would be forced to eliminate the Alternative Textbook Grant program entirely. In doing so, we would be unable to meet the needs of previous, current, and future grantees, which would ultimately result in students paying more for textbooks.
>
> **How will library services be impacted if the position is not filled?**
> If we are unable to fill this position, we would need to eliminate the Alternative Textbook Grant program entirely. Additionally, affiliated services such as instruction and training on Creative Commons licensing and faculty consultations, including advising of best practices on open textbook publishing, would no longer be possible. OU Libraries could no longer provide the preservation and dissemination of newly created openly licensed textbooks, book chapters, and ancillary material critical to teaching and learning. Finally, if this position is not filled, OU Libraries' current standing as a national leader in the area of open educational resources would deteriorate and eventually become non-existent.

Figure 11.1
Sample data collection for benchmarking a faculty position, provided to HR.

OU was unable to fill this position in its initial search because the salary was not competitive and the top candidate received a better salary from a community college. We were able to successfully reclassify this position from Librarian I to Librarian II as part of the freeze exemption process.

If the position is not filled, which job responsibilities will continue and by whom?
Current OU Libraries staff are unable to fulfill the job responsibilities of the Open Education Coordinator. The position would be eliminated.

Comparative data
- OU was the first library in the nation to create a full-time position dedicated to Open Educational Resources (OER).
- OU's activity in the realm of OER and the Open Textbook Network (OTN), of which OU is a founding member, allows us to compete with other OTN institutions committed to OER, such as the University of Arizona, University of Colorado, Clemson, Florida State, University of Iowa, University of Kansas, University of Massachusetts, University of Minnesota, University of North Carolina, North Carolina State, Oklahoma State, Penn State, Purdue, Rutgers, Temple, University of Texas, and University of Austin.

Information about the importance of OER
- OER were ranked by Educause as one of their "Top 10 Strategic Technologies" in their 2019 Trend Watch for higher education.
- A two-year study reveals that instructors found OER materials helped them make positive changes to their teaching.
- EdSurge declares OER an essential teaching tool beginning in 2018.
- The average college student spends approximately $1,000 per year on textbooks and yet performs scholastically no better than the student who utilizes free OER.
- A recent survey by Affordable Learning Georgia found that over half of the respondents will use—or will consider using—OER within the next three years.

Figure 11.1 (continued)
Sample data collection for benchmarking a faculty position, provided to HR.

- Member libraries of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC)—of which OU Libraries is one—documented OER use at more than 4,000 institutions primarily in the U.S. and Canada, saving students one billion dollars.
- Colvard, Watson, and Park (2018) found that students are likely to have better performance when OER are used versus traditional texts.

Accomplishments to date
- To date, through the Alternative Textbook Grant program administered by the Open Education Coordinator, more than 28,000 OU students have saved $2.3 million in displaced textbook costs.
- 85 OU faculty members have received Alternative Textbook Grants in 108 classes.
- The Alternative Textbook Grant is on track to save students $3 million by 2020.
- For every dollar OU Libraries spends on the Alternative Textbook Grant, it saves students $17.90.
- Items created with Alternative Textbook Grants in SHAREOK are in use worldwide and have been downloaded a tremendous number of times. (A partial list of items and their downloads was provided, some having more than 10,000 downloads.)
- Savings from the Alternative Textbook Grant have compounded at the following rates:
  - 3rd year: first million saved
  - 5th year: second million saved
  - 6th year: third million saved
  - 7th year: fourth million saved
- It took three years for the Alternative Textbook Grant to save students $1million. Next year, its 7th, the program will save $1M in that one year alone.

Figure 11.1 (continued)
Sample data collection for benchmarking a faculty position, provided to HR.

Staff benchmarking is often not quite so extensive. Figure 11.2 provides an example from an acquisitions staff position.

If we did not fill this position, what other strategies if any would we have to meet the needs?
Already faced with the 2017 reallocation of one position from the acquisitions department into another library unit in order to meet organizational needs, we currently have an additional two vacant positions. To meet needs, we have taken the essential tasks from each of the two additional vacant positions and crafted a hybrid position, which we currently seek to fill. It is vital that this hybrid position be filled, as critical projects have already been put on hold while we work to meet the basic needs of the department, from dealing with receiving material backlogs to handling invoices in a more complex and time-consuming financial payment system. This, in turn, affects departments within the library and library users, as materials cannot be processed or delivered to students and faculty in a timely manner. This directly impacts the teaching, learning, and research missions of the university; filling the position ensures that staffing levels in this unit are sufficient to meet current end-user needs.

If the position is not filled, which job responsibilities will continue and who will be responsible for them?
Because each of these positions already has a full complement of duties, including some added during the loss of the last departmental position, each of these responsibilities would be prioritized, with some being significantly delayed or even eliminated. Delays or elimination will endanger the efficient acquisition of library materials and will negatively impact library users by making resources less readily available to them.

Trends and comparative data
For FY16–FY19, this position handled an average of more than 24,000 items and processed nearly 3,000 invoices each fiscal year.

Peer institutions have been surveyed about staffing in their acquisitions departments; 15 institutions responded.

- The average number of professionals in equivalent departments was four; OUL has three.
- The average number of staff in equivalent departments was twelve; OU has four staff engaged in acquisitions.
- Two-thirds of peer institutions have added or upgraded positions, particularly increasing focus on e-resource management and analytics.

Figure 11.2
Sample data collection for benchmarking a staff position, provided to HR.

Note that two other data points are reflected in figures 11.1 and 11.2. The first data point is current benchmarking data from among peer libraries. Researching, analyzing, and summarizing this data provides a static portrait, illustrating where an institution stands in comparison to its peers at a particular moment in time. Seek the data to demonstrate that the organization is a leader and thus filling the position maintains that leading role, or that the organization is competing among high-profile peers and maintaining the position supports the continued ability to compete, or that the organization is behind the curve and thus having the position is essential to becoming competitive. This data can make the difference in receiving approval for a position, especially in institutions that are actively seeking to raise their profile among their peers—which seems to encompass almost all institutions.

The second data point is data from within the organization. In the above examples, internal data are used in two ways. First, the internal data provide a useful trendline, illustrating the amount of work performed over time or documenting the progress made by the unit seeking to fill an empty position or create a new position. Furthermore, in collecting trend data, consider how best to present that data to underscore the point(s) to be made. If the data provide a clear upward trend, showing year-by-year trends can be quite effective. If the data are less clear, demonstrating the average across a number of years may make a more compelling argument. Sometimes it helps to set specific data within the larger picture of unit functioning. If the empty position performs 20,000 instances of task X and the two other positions in the department also perform 20,000 tasks of Y and Z work, respectively, that means not filling the position results in the remaining positions now performing half as much work again—and of a task that is new to them. In such an instance, it is almost certainly the case that the number of tasks the department will be able to complete will drop and some important tasks may cease to be performed entirely. Of course, if the data do not support the request being pursued, then perhaps it is time to reconsider the need, restructure positions, or determine what is being done or not done that should receive more investigation.

The second way that internal data are used can be seen in the acquisitions position information provided above. The data are used to craft a picture of how the organization has met changes in the recent past, demonstrating that the organization does not ask for each position to be refilled just because it is empty, or to refill the position just as it has always been structured. In the acquisitions example, the reader can see that the acquisitions unit has actually dropped the number of persons it employs since 2017; the 2017 position was shifted to another unit to support growing needs. The reader also learns that the acquisitions unit is not seeking to fill both of its empty positions; rather, tasks from the two positions are being combined into one hybrid position. There is no

further need to indicate what will happen with the remaining empty position, although one could surmise that it will likely be restructured and reallocated elsewhere in the organization, or perhaps its funding will be combined with other funding to propose an entirely new position. In point of fact, the final information sent to campus HR was written in such a way that the second empty position was not mentioned at all; in this way, we worked to remove it from the budgetary chopping block and reserve it for reallocation and restructuring in the near future. The important point is that the organization has demonstrated in the narrative that it actively considers each vacancy and how best to use it to advance its mission and meet identified needs.

In the effort to develop the data that can support a strong case for filling an empty position when a freeze exemption is finally lifted, there are perhaps less tangible but equally valuable benefits for the organization. The interim leader and the administrative team become very familiar with the data being developed; this puts them in the position of being able to argue as persuasively as possible if the position is questioned. The middle manager and those they supervise are able to observe that the organization values their unit and the work it performs and are willing to press for approval to address needs. Even if the position is not approved, it's likely those involved think they have made their best effort to receive approval, and what is learned from the failure can be applied to improve the chances that a future effort will be successful.

After a Hiring Freeze

After the hiring freeze is lifted, it's time to see all the hard work performed during the freeze come to a (hopefully) successful conclusion. The most recent hiring freeze at the University of Oklahoma, which was a result of COVID budgetary concerns, was a "hard" freeze for six months. As classes began in fall 2020, the freeze remained in place but was softened to allow some hiring. We scanned the operating environment to determine how best to move forward.

Once again, the organization's chief personnel administrator should be seeking clear information from institutional human resources and their peer network to guide the library in how best to make a successful case for hiring empty positions. What questions are being asked? What data is being sought? Simultaneous with this activity, library administration should be prioritizing which positions will be pursued first. This is not just a matter of determining where the hottest fires are blazing. While that is certainly one factor, there will be others at play, and what the chief personnel administrator has learned from contacts will be key here. Is it better to pursue positions that were posted before the freeze was implemented? Are faculty or professional positions being prioritized over classified staff? Do some positions require additional levels of approval—for example, do IT positions require approval from the campus CTO or CIO? Are

reclassifications being considered, or is it better to wait on those? Does a position have to tie directly to the institution's strategic plan to be approved?

And speaking of the institutional strategic plan, make it work to the library's advantage when seeking to fill positions. Compare the job descriptions of the positions for which the organization will be seeking approval to the strategic plan. Use the plan language wherever it makes sense in the job description as well as the justification that will likely be submitted with a request for approval. Figure 11.3 provides a justification example from the University of Oklahoma for a staff position; the strategic plan language or elements are in italics.

How does this request meet the critical needs of the university?

This position ensures that the over 2 million items stored in the Library Service Center (LSC) and South Annex storage facility are available in a timely manner to *meet the research and scholarship needs of OU faculty, students, and staff* as well as fulfill interlibrary loan obligations to partner institutions. In FY19, 2,570 requests were fulfilled from off-site storage locations. This position is responsible for processing high-density storage materials and maintains and operates the library cargo van and the elevated work platform, which is essential to safe, efficient high-density storage. This position collaborates with other library departments to move and organize collections to provide excellent service to library users and delivers materials from the Libraries' Acquisitions and Description & Access departments to Bizzell Memorial Library, ensuring library users have timely access to new materials in print. This position holds a University credit card and adheres to University-wide purchasing policies and procedures while ordering supplies for all LSC departments and ordering items for Acquisitions that are not available through their vendors. The LSC ensures a culture of service in providing a key *research, teaching, and learning support function* to the University Libraries and OU community.

This position aligns with and supports the university's strategic plan by
- *supporting efforts to become a top public research university by ensuring staff levels are sufficient to meet faculty and student needs, both in-person and online;*
- *providing an opportunity for current staff to advance within the university;*
- providing seamless access to library collections in *support of the cutting edge discovery, innovation, research, and creative activities of current and additional faculty hires and graduate program recruits in all academic disciplines;*
- providing timely delivery of materials in *support of both innovative teaching at all levels and increased doctoral degree completion;*

Figure 11.3
Justification for a staff position.

- supervising student employees who will *learn communication, teamwork, leadership, listening, and fundamental business skills* within the unit; and
- *supporting synergies across all OU campuses* by providing materials to our sister health sciences and Tulsa campuses.

If we did not fill this position, what other strategies if any would we have to meet the needs?

Strategies are very limited to fill the needs if this position goes unfilled. Staffing in similar facilities in the Big 12 and other regional academic libraries average 3 full-time staff. The Library Service Center currently holds more items than all of these facilities. *As the university expands faculty hiring and PhD programs* the Libraries will need to provide seamless access to the collections to *support their research and creative activity*.

Institution	Current Full-Time Staff	Current Number of Volumes
University of Oklahoma	1	2,500,000
Oklahoma State University	3	415,395
Texas Tech	3	132,000
University of Kansas	3	1,807,054
Iowa State	2	1,500,000
West Virginia	1	625,546
PASCAL (serves multiple Colorado Academic Libraries)	3	1,600,000
Nebraska	2	730,000
Missouri	3	1,400,000

How will library services be impacted if the position is not filled?

Document delivery and interlibrary loan requests from the off-site facilities will have longer turnaround times. When this position is filled, articles can be delivered to users in less than 24 hours. In the current situation article fulfillment averages 3 days; turnaround times will increase as the number of requests rises throughout the semester. Deliveries between the LSC and Bizzell will be reduced from 5 days a week to 3. Without this position, the transfer of items into the Library Service Center will be dramatically reduced, preventing new growth in the Bizzell Memorial Library and branch library collections. Material moves would need to be performed by vendors at considerable expense to the university.

Figure 11.3 (continued)
Justification for a staff position.

A project to transfer materials we have agreed to retain for the Western Regional Storage Trust (WEST) will be delayed. WEST is a distributed, retrospective print journal repository program. Retaining and preserving these print journals guarantees OU faculty, students, and staff as well as researchers from other member institutions access to journals unavailable in electronic formats. Document delivery and interlibrary loan requests from the off-site facilities will have unacceptably long turnaround times because we will be unable to make daily deliveries to campus. Inability to meet interlibrary loan turnaround time targets puts the University Libraries in violation of partner agreements and endangers our ability to rely on partner institutions to, in turn, fill the interlibrary loan requests of OU users in a timely fashion.

If the position is not filled, which job responsibilities will continue and who will be responsible for them?

The supervisor for this position is the unit head and is responsible for both the off-site storage facilities and stacks management in Bizzell Memorial Library. While the Associate Dean for Scholarly Resources and Services serves as the Interim Dean, the supervisor for this position has also taken on supervision of the Interlibrary Loan Manager. Supervision of student workers, safety practices, van and elevated work platform maintenance, item retrieval, and transfers will be performed by the Head of Storage and Delivery, but all of these duties will be slower and reduced.

Only the Head of Storage and Delivery and a single student worker are currently trained on the use of the elevated work platform. Use of it is currently limited to once a day but will be further reduced to three times per week if the position is unfilled. Training an employee on using the elevated work platform is a time-consuming and regular practice, and retraining is necessary to prevent injury to the driver, others, and university property. Infrequent use of this machinery can be almost as dangerous as untrained use.

Supplies ordering will be handled by the Library Dean's office administrative assistant. Material ordering will be performed by a Description & Access staff assistant.

During the fall and spring semesters, usage of library materials increases dramatically. Document delivery requests for off-site storage materials in October alone exceed requests in June, July, and August combined. Distributing job duties is not sustainable without significant impact on library users. Long turnaround times in requests will translate into users not having timely access to the materials they need for teaching, learning, and research, and will erode trust in other library services.

Figure 11.3 (continued)
Justification for a staff position.

After the freeze is lifted, it's possible that being an interim leader may translate into being more challenged to successfully fill open positions. Permanent appointees may have an inside track because it is assumed they aren't short-timers, that they have the long view in mind for their unit. However, a parent institution that has more than the short-term in its sights will likely see the value of considering the needs of units headed by interim leaders. It is to the institution's benefit to have a library that isn't suffering from gaping holes in its organizational chart; that shows stakeholders that the institution recognizes the importance of key support structures such as libraries, and it shows likely position candidates the same. If the parent institution isn't seeing that value, it's important for the interim to make that case.

Finally, don't let a failure stop progress. Learn from it, revise, and resubmit. It's obvious advice but sound, nevertheless. Use everything learned to help the new library leader, when appointed, be successful in the job. That might even include some pre-work with position candidates (taking into account the possible campus political ramifications), such as sharing the most important hires identified by the organization so that they can address support for hiring in their negotiations and start-up package discussions.

Conclusion

No interim library leader leads alone or in a vacuum. Resources and support exist within the library organization and across the parent institution. There are strategies to get out ahead of a hiring freeze, weather it, and emerge free of "freezer burn." Don't hesitate to take advantage of those strategies or the resources and support available. To do otherwise is the real failure. The library and its community have placed their confidence in you as interim leader.