

Tips for Writing Your Self-Evaluation

See also Guidelines for Preparing Self-Evaluations at <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/LHRD/revself.html>

Tip: Include some context or a sense of scope

Instead of:

I am the Head of the Dumbledore Library.

Suggested revision:

As Head of the Dumbledore Library at Hogwarts, I supervise six full time wizards, three full time witches, eighteen student witches and am responsible for the Herbarium and the Potions Lab. Hogwarts has a student population of one thousand students and fifty faculty members and is widely regarded as the premier wizarding educational institution in this world or the next. The Dumbledore Library collection includes ten million volumes, 50 million linear feet of archival material and the Voldemart collection of Dark Arts Realia and is the largest non-Muggle academic library in the world. The Library is visited by hundreds of scholars every year, including deceased luminaries such as Isaac Newton and Leonardo da Vinci, who make the grueling trip from the Afterworld to consult our collections.¹

Better because:

- Gives better sense of the scope of responsibilities;
- Gives a sense of the library's context: population served, size and importance of collections; impact on the field, etc. No library is an island!

Cautions:

- On the other hand, one paragraph is enough. We believe you! No need to go on and on, and NO NEED for support documentation about how great the library is. Just a bit of scope, that's all we're asking!
- Include the scope or context that is appropriate for your position.

Tip: Write about the period under review

(From the self-evaluation of a person undergoing a two year review for the period of January 2005 - December 2006):

I am Head of the Magic Library at UC Berkeley where I work closely with the Magic and Dark Arts Department faculty. As the faculty's research and instructional interests increasingly turn toward new areas of alchemy, including a renewed interest in changing base metals into gold, I have had to change my collection development policies. Increasingly, I find myself working with the

¹ To HPP (Harry Potter Purists): We made this up and didn't even try to fact-check. Get over it.

philosophy selector to collect in the intersection of our two traditional disciplines. Two years ago we even collaborated to acquire Nicholas Flamel's magnum opus, The Philosopher's Stone, more popularly known as The Sorcerer's Stone. This was a major coup as no other public university in the United States holds a copy.

Throughout my career I have been active with the Northern California Section of the National Association of Magic Librarians, serving in a variety of elected positions. In recognition of my stature within the organization I have been asked to moderate a panel presentation at the upcoming biannual national meeting in 2008, titled, "Smoke and Mirrors: The Role of the Magic Librarian in an Academic Research Library."

What's wrong:

- Future and past activities discussed but no specifics about the two year period under review - remember, this is a merit review. Not even sure that the acquisition "two years ago" was actually during this review period. Be sure you and the RI are clear about the time period of the review.
- Older and future events can be referenced if applicable to the narration, but in general, stay within the time period.
- Conversely, career status and promotional reviews evaluate the candidate's entire career, so in these reviews don't limit yourself to just a two or three year time period.

Tips:

- **Discuss your challenges**
- **Focus on impact**
- **Focus on your professional contribution**
- **Connect your work to the big picture**

Instead of:

I managed a very challenging serials cancellation project last year. I selected the titles for cancellation and supervised a library assistant in the closing of the affected catalog records.

Suggested revision:

Budget and space constraints, brought on by last year's catastrophic fire and this year's flood, made it necessary for us to cancel 35% of our serials titles last year. I consulted widely with faculty, library staff, and other library units, who were united in their opposition to the idea of cancelling serials but also refused to allocate more money to the library and virulently disagreed on alternatives. Relying on my extensive subject expertise, knowledge of electronic resources and familiarity with faculty research practices, I was able to propose and implement a plan of deselection in combination with some creative fundraising to obtain electronic alternatives to some faculty's favored resources. We are also proactively locust-proofing our special collections in consultation with experts from the University of Weltschmerz.

On the downside, there are still serious gaps in the collections to be addressed, and a permanent solution to our budget crisis seems a long way off. I am still mending relations with some of the faculty and I have learned some valuable lessons on the art of diplomacy. Now that the faculty have been alerted to the crisis and how it affects their areas of interest, I hope to work with them to find a way to permanently restore the library's budget and collections.

Better because:

- Gives us a sense of your challenges (without whining or slandering anyone, at least not by name).
- Describes the impact on your primary clientele and your outreach to them.
- What special qualities did you bring to this project?
- Not everything comes up roses, but what did you learn from the experience?
- Don't just list your activities; you can do that on the Biography form. Write about how you exercised your professional judgment, experience, and creativity.
- Final outcome in terms of your primary clientele (not: the library is better, but our users think it's a lot better and here's how!) Connect your work to users, to the profession, or to your academic field.

Clarify and Emphasize Your Role

Instead of:

I was a member of the Task Force to Reduce the Number of Committees and Task Forces, which produced a 1200 page report entitled "Reducing the Number of Committees and Task Forces at the UC Berkeley Library: A Preliminary Report." I attended all the meetings and served on the follow-up Task Force, the Task Force to Implement the Recommendations of the Task Force to Reduce the Number of Committees and Task Forces.

Suggested revision:

From 2002-2005 I was a member of the Efficiency Task Force, which produced a groundbreaking report Just Do It ([url](#)). The recommendations of this report have been adopted by many subsequent committees and task forces and the Efficiency Task Force has received many queries from within the Library, from other campus units, and from other UC campuses. I participated in the discussions to shape the agenda and was the only librarian representing the point of view of Area Studies selectors. I drafted Sections XXXXVIII and LXI and Appendices Q-T and was responsible for coordinating the queries from other UC campuses.

Better because:

- What was the impact?
- We want to know what your contributions were, not just that you were on the committee.

Other reminders:

- CAPA is composed of seven librarians from all over campus. You don't have to explain to us what the campus is like or what the LCSH is, but you may have to include a sentence or two to explain some of what you do and why it's significant.
- We can't say it often enough: be concise! We read a lot of files. Let us remember you as the one who accomplished so much in your review period and explained it so well yet concisely...not as the one that went on and on for no reason. And you don't have to write about every single thing you did; list everything in the Biography and discuss the highlights.
- No need to agonize over presentation, but you should find a way to keep your dossier together and in order (what if someone drops it?) and yet keep documents accessible (we actually read them!). Bigger is NOT better; we are impressed by quality, not quantity. Choose your documentation carefully-- we do not want to see every e-mail you've ever received thanking you for something.