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"Viewed as Equals": The Impacts of Library Organizational Cultures and Management on Library Staff Morale

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ABSTRACT

The literature on academic librarian morale is burgeoning, yet less attention has been paid to the workplace experiences of staff. This research team, which included library staff and librarians, conducted 34 structured online interviews with academic library staff across the United States. A theoretical model and interview findings are presented, which reveal the ways in which organizational culture, library hierarchies, and management style affect staff morale. Recommendations are offered, suggesting that, while change can present substantial challenges, efforts to address equity in compensation, provide professional growth opportunities, and create more collegial work environments are essential to improving staff morale.

KEYWORDS

Morale; library staff morale; academic libraries; library hierarchies; library organizational culture; job satisfaction; employee engagement; employee discouragement; professional development; professional growth opportunities; MLIS study; professional mobility; professional advancement; library staff experiences; burnout; toxicity

Introduction

In recent years, academic librarians have increasingly related their experiences of low morale and burnout, and the body of research around these issues is robust and expanding. The seminal work of researcher and librarian Kaetrena Davis Kendrick, in particular her article titled "The Low Morale Experience of Academic Librarians: A Phenomenological Study," grounds much of this output (Kendrick, 2017). At the same time, less in-depth attention has been paid to the workplace experiences of academic library staff. Jason Martin has researched job satisfaction and workplace engagement experienced by both librarians and library staff, using mainly quantitative methods, but his articles, while addressing many of the issues impacting morale, did not focus on morale specifically (Martin, 2020a, 2020b).

This study is an examination of the factors which impact library staff morale, using qualitative research based on grounded theory methodology. It explicitly considers

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library staff members and roles, as opposed to those of librarians. The original questions centered around the role of library hierarchies in the morale levels of their staff, with a particular interest in opportunities available to library staff for engaging work at their role levels within hierarchies, whether there are avenues for upward mobility such as those available to librarians, the potential to "cross over" into the librarian category, and also why are there so few studies on library staff and their morale.

Literature review

As mentioned above, librarians' experiences of low morale have been increasingly discussed in the literature, yet less attention has been paid to the workplace experiences of library staff. As of 2012, using the most recent data available from the National Center for Education Statistics, the authors calculate that library staff comprised almost 60% of all employees in academic libraries, excluding students (Phan et al., 2014), but perhaps because much of library-related research is performed by librarians, there has been a dearth of research on staff.

The term "library staff" refers to library employees who are in positions that do not have the title "librarian" and which do not require the MLIS (Master of Library and Information Science) degree, in line with the definition established by Schilperoort and colleagues (Schilperoort et al., 2021). In this research, the authors also distinguish between job satisfaction and morale. As suggested by Jason Martin and in line with Paul Spector's work on job satisfaction (Martin, 2020b; Spector, 2021), job satisfaction is defined as the characteristics of the job and its structure, including the facets of pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, performance-based rewards, rules and procedures, coworkers, the nature of the work, and communication. In line with Kennedy and Garewal's elegant definition, morale is then defined as "a combination of job satisfaction and affective commitment to the organization" (Kennedy & Garewal, 2020). It is possible to have high levels of job satisfaction concurrently with low morale, due to external factors such as stress and burnout.

While morale issues in libraries have been of concern for decades (Nitecki, 1984), the research landscape around this important aspect of the workplace was reinvigorated by the seminal work of Kaetrena Davis Kendrick, "The Low Morale Experience of Academic Librarians: A Phenomenological Study" (Kendrick, 2017). In this and in her subsequent studies on low morale in ethnic and racial minority librarians, the public librarian low morale experience, and librarians leaving low morale experiences, Kendrick paints a detailed and sometimes chilling picture of workplace factors leading to low morale, events which can trigger low morale, the effects of low morale on physical and emotional health, and the responses of librarians to low morale situations.

Weyant and colleagues (Weyant et al., 2021a, 2021b) have recently published an in-depth two-part literature review of articles from the past two decades on the morale of librarians and library staff, which contextualizes Kendrick's work in the general research landscape around morale in library workplaces. Both note that there is a tendency among researchers to approach the question of morale from a variety of adjacent concepts, such as perhaps most commonly, job satisfaction. Other studies examine engagement, productivity, workplace conflict, organizational justice (Henry et al., 2018; Martin, 2020a;

Matteson et al., 2021; Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006), and additional aspects of work in general and library work in particular. They shed light on potential impacts on morale but stop short of its often-challenging emotional components. Incorporating this difficult content into the discussion is one way in which Kendrick's work is so important.

Between the depth of Kendrick's work and the breadth of the review(s) by Weyant et al., many of the issues and recent approaches to library morale research can be assessed, mainly related to librarians. However, one area the research team identified as a way to contribute to the conversations of Kendrick and Weyant and her coauthors was by more deeply exploring the experiences of academic library staff. To the best of the team's knowledge, this study is the first to perform an in-depth exploration of the morale contributors and experiences of library staff, using rigorous qualitative methodology. Workplace morale is an area best explored using qualitative methods (Murray, 1999), which can show the morale continuum and its nuances more powerfully (Kendrick, 2017). In contrast, quantitative methods do not tend to generate new understandings the way that qualitative methods do (Martin, 2018). Toward a mixed-methods approach, Jason Martin and others have included an open-ended question at the end of a quantitative survey. Those responses are then analyzed using qualitative methodology, but such textual analysis yields different results than semi-structured in-person interviews.

The central interest driving this research is to consider the librarian-staff divide, and by extension hierarchies in libraries. This study seeks to determine whether MLIS-holding library staff who sit on the "wrong" side of the library-staff divide in terms of their career aspirations, yet with credentials that presumably should have enabled them to easily cross it, have lower morale. Historically, some libraries hired workers without the library master's degree to aid patrons while dealing with a shortage of qualified library school graduates (Mugnier, 1980). By the 1980s, Allen Veaner (1982) characterized the divide between staff and librarians as resembling a "fence" rather than existing along a continuum: "it is possible to talk, see, and hear through the fence but one cannot cross it." In a UK study by Thapisa (Thapisa, 1989), respondents saw the librarian-staff divide in terms of social class, stating "the gap between library assistants and 'professional' staff is huge and totally unjust." Murray (1999) notes that library staff are not expected to advance in the way librarians are, in essence blocking their progress, while Oberg and colleagues (Oberg et al., 1992) found that many library staff members have higher educational attainment than their positions call for, which is still true today. An essential aspect of the librarian-staff divide is whether librarianship is and should be considered a profession in its own right; the answer to this question necessarily impacts staff. Jones and Stivers (Jones & Stivers, 2004), in an article that includes a stinging critique of Veaner as elitist and rigid, offer an alternative structuring that relaxes the librarian-staff divide while not diminishing the librarian professionalism. In addition, Litwin notes that while librarians' and library staff's fates are so intertwined that challenges to librarian professionalism would hurt staff, social class is actually the unacknowledged force behind the divide, meaning that librarians have to face the fact that the MLIS requirement for professional entry is an equity concern (Litwin, 2010).

Librarian and staff divisions are generally aligned with hierarchies. Rothschild posits that hierarchies are flattening in the corporate world, with rigid stratified structures giving way to team-based networks (Rothschild, 2000). However, hierarchies in academic

libraries do not appear to be flattening substantially. In a recent report from the research organization, Ithaka S + R "several" of the twenty libraries interviewed were considering some form of restructuring away from a pure hierarchy, but they were apparently the exception (Schonfeld, 2016).

The fact that librarians may be faculty members at their institutions enmeshes library hierarchies with the broader institutional hierarchy. As Martin (2020b) notes, most academic libraries sit in bureaucracies that breed politics and gamesmanship; in these settings, the best ideas or hardest work may not prevail, decreasing morale. Rigid hierarchies are also ripe for bullying, and superiors may take advantage of power differentials to oppress subordinates in the name of productivity (Staninger, 2016). In actuality, the very existence of overt labor stratification in libraries means that some kinds of labor are less valued (Bowman & Samsky, 2020).

While academic library work still operates within hierarchies and bureaucracies, many of the factors that impact morale are under the control of a library staff member's direct supervisor (Kennedy & Garewal, 2020, Matteson et al., 2021). This makes the role of the manager a particularly salient one when looking at library staff morale; managers' behavior can have a substantial effect on employee morale (remembering that many library staff members are themselves managers). Library managers tend to learn on the job since "the library profession has yet to agree on the requirements for preparing future librarians for managerial roles and leadership positions." (Mackenzie & Smith, 2009) This means that training is needed to improve managerial skills, particularly in conflict resolution (Henry et al., 2018). Employees want their managers to have technical competence, and to understand their subordinates' jobs (Artz et al., 2017; Johannessen, 2018; Martin, 2020b); in fact, Hill notes that having been a library technician can improve their managerial performance (Hill, 2014). Employees also want managers who are culturally competent in the workplace milieu, and who have empathy (Martin, 2018). While managers may see themselves as empathetic, they are not always seen that way by others (Henry et al., 2018). Fortunately, research on emotional intelligence in leaders implies that emotional intelligence competencies can be sharpened and improved (Harris, 2011; Kreitz, 2009; Martin, 2019). All managers should be engaging in regular self-evaluation and reflection, to confirm that they are treating all employees fairly, and are offering support and coaching that will ensure that every employee has the chance to succeed in their job, no matter their starting place (Harris, 2011; Topper, 2007). Organizations need to be vigilant about confronting and dealing with harmful management practices and toxic leaders, whose negative impacts on staff can have deleterious effects on the entire organization (Martin, 2019; Ortega, 2019).

Managers can also improve employee morale by interventions such as: ensuring employees' involvement in and receipt of organizational communication (Weyant et al., 2021b), planning employee programs, and appreciation methods with a range of social preferences in mind (Sorondo, 2017; Weyant et al., 2021b), setting and implementing inclusive organizational values (Martin, 2020a), empowering staff and giving them autonomy (Kennedy & Garewal, 2020; Matteson et al., 2021), involving workers in decisions that affect them, especially related to committee membership (Murray, 1999; Nitecki, 1984), supporting the professional development of staff (Murray, 1999; Owen, 1997), and striving for organizational justice: distributive, procedural, informational and interpersonal (Matteson et al., 2021). Staff should be encouraged to be part of and/or

create new communities of practice for themselves, to combat isolation and imposter syndrome (Johannessen, 2018; Owen, 1997; Vela, 2018; Wilkes & Ward, 2016).

Role-blurring and task overlap in responsibilities between library staff and librarians is another area that may have morale impacts, as the staff takes on librarians' traditional roles and job tasks, without additional compensation or recognition (Gremmels, 2013; Kreitz & Ogden, 1990; Martin, 2020b; Oberg et al., 1992; Owen, 1997; Zhu, 2012). Librarians may move to control library staff activities in the face of this territory threat (Fragola, 2009). In addition, the fact that library staff's educational and professional development activities cannot assure them a reliable career path in libraries is at the very least problematic, and ties in with the discussion of the librarian-staff divide above. Library assistants may never be able to advance from the initial position and wage structure they are hired into (Murray, 1999), with career plateauing being a real concern (Weyant et al., 2021a). Some researchers, and others in the field, question why the MLIS degree is presented as the only avenue for library staff advancement (Jones & Stivers, 2004; Litwin, 2010; Oberg et al., 1992; Owen, 1997) much as moving into managerial roles is seen as the way for librarians to gain career advancement, whether or not it is a fit for them personally.

It is also important to examine the workplace behaviors that can lead to either low morale or engagement and organizational commitment. Each library work setting has its individual culture (Weyant et al., 2021a), and most are the locus of vocational awe, which Fobazi Ettarh defines as "[the notion] that libraries as institutions are inherently good, sacred notions, and therefore beyond critique. [Ettarh argues] that the concept of vocational awe directly correlates to problems within librarianship like burnout and low salary" (Ettarh, 2018). Using the lens of vocational awe to examine work in libraries can therefore be useful, as vocational awe can impact morale, but it also means seeing libraries as "special" and uniquely desirable settings. This view risks losing the dispassionate view of libraries as workplaces which are vulnerable to the same dysfunctions and amenable to the same solutions as other settings.

Researchers have identified the following "negative" behaviors (in quotes because even labeling behaviors is a potentially biased judgment) as endemic in libraries, and potentially contributing to low morale: incivility, microaggressions, bullying, mobbing, sabotage, and toxicity (Dohe et al., 2019; Freedman & Vreven, 2016; Henry et al., 2018; Kendrick, 2017; Kendrick & Damasco, 2019; Motin, 2009; Ortega, 2019; Staninger, 2016; Walker & Watkins, 2020; Young et al., 2015). Given that low morale engenders a "mix of affective, physiological, and cognitive responses" (Kendrick, 2017) and can deepen harmful reaction patterns in individuals in response to it, such as the "fight, fawn, freeze" reactions described by Andrews, managers and organizations need to accept accountability for the harm perpetuated by top-down action and inaction, and not expect workers alone to be responsible for their own healing (Andrews, 2020). As Andrews writes, what is "often misinterpreted as imposter syndrome [is] instead the product of oppressions such as precarious labor, racism, and sexism." On the other hand, "positive" behaviors which can lead to engagement and "organizational citizenship" (Murray, 1999) in academic libraries include emotional intelligence and a focus on relationships and communication (Martin, 2020a), civility, and mindful speech (Doucette & Tolley, 2017), and giving feedback, appreciation, and recognition (Hosoi, 2005; Kennedy & Garewal, 2020; Matteson et al., 2021; Murray, 1999).

Other morale challenges are not solely due to behaviors or managerial interventions, however. First and foremost are the negative experiences of many BIPOC people who work in academic libraries. Being BIPOC is a complicating or intersecting factor for low morale, as BIPOC people have been historically marginalized in a White-centered library culture (Kendrick & Damasco, 2019). Not only do BIPOC people have to manage up the hierarchy (performing emotional labor to keep supervisors happy), but they also perform emotional labor toward their White colleagues (Evans & Moore, 2015). As Kendrick and Damasco write about library work: "Minorities engage disproportionately in emotional labor and associated negative effects are compounded by issues of White power dynamics, institutional race neutrality, and devaluation of the influence of race and racism on and during processes of emotion management" (Kendrick & Damasco, 2019).

This racialized emotional labor is constant and varied. Forms include stereotype threat (in which a BIPOC person must be conscious of whether they are validating stereotypes of their group), deauthentication (in which a BIPOC person must hide or reduce their natural personality presentation so that their ethnic/racial/cultural identity does not threaten libraries structured according to professional-class White and White-centered values), and systems which enable the oppression of BIPOC and other marginalized workers. Being BIPOC predisposes library staff to be bullied (Freedman & Vreven, 2016), and to endure a range of racist microaggressions (Alabi, 2015; Evans & Moore, 2015; Lee & Morfitt, 2020; Young et al., 2015). Existing isolation is exacerbated for BIPOC library staff; at the very least, they need to have access to networks of minority colleagues (Kendrick & Damasco, 2019).

For all library staff, sources of stress and extreme financial strain are contributors to low morale. Results of a survey conducted by Lo and Herman reveal that working in a library is more stressful than being a fireman or policeman (Lo & Herman, 2017). Library staff may work in relative isolation, for example when working in small branches or doing shift work, which can lead to feelings of precarity and low morale (Bowman & Samsky, 2020; Fragola, 2009). Library staff members are often poorly paid for their level of experience or education, especially when they experience "role blurring" which means they are required to perform librarian roles for no extra compensation. While there have been extreme budget pressures on libraries since 2008 (Weyant et al., 2021a), this does not reduce the morale and attrition impacts when library staff members are under-compensated—in fact, such under-compensation leads to turnover which, amid budget cuts, can cause further loss of morale and workforce capacity in academic libraries. Beyond verging on unethical exploitation, low wages are worsened by intersecting personal factors such as family situations and student loans (Martin, 2020a), and they make staff feel less valued (Murray, 1999). However, Weyant and colleagues caution that if an environment is toxic, it does not help morale to improve wages alone (Weyant et al., 2021b).

The busy manager may ask: why is it important to understand the dynamics of library staff morale? If a business justification is needed, it is available: understanding and in turn, improving morale can combat burnout, turnover, and decreased productivity. However, the authors suggest that, ethically, examining the staff role itself ties into existing justice and equity concerns within academic libraries. Examining long-held

library structures and attitudes can lead to positive change for all employees. However, for library staff, in particular, change is long overdue, and librarians have not to date been strong advocates for staff. As far back as 1992, Oberg noted "The rapid changes occurring in the library workplace underscore the need for continuing local and national review of the deployment and utilization of all library staff," noting the need for "model staff development programs" and chiding librarians who "shy away from and even deny these problems" (Oberg et al., 1992). In 1999 Murray reiterated the staff view that librarians did not know what staff's responsibilities were, much less how they felt about their work (Murray, 1999). In 2019, Kendrick and Damasco similarly called out "White librarians' tacit acceptance of LIS workforce marginalization" (Kendrick & Damasco, 2019), and the authors of this paper have identified the dearth of research on library staff morale. It is time for librarians to advocate for their staff colleagues, and examine their experiences more closely, with an eye toward organizational justice.

Methods

Recruitment, interviewing, analysis

The research team's roles included library staff, former library staff, a recent MLS grad, an MLIS student, and librarians. Research grant funding was obtained from the Librarians Association of the University of California (available only to University of California librarians), to pay for transcription and interviewee incentives. Human subjects/IRB approval was received from the University of California, Berkeley's Committee for Protection of Human Subjects. To recruit subjects, emails were sent to library listservs and state library associations, selected in order to increase regional diversity. (See Appendix A for the email content.) Staff from the University of California, Berkeley were excluded from the study. Listservs contacted were:

- COLLIB-L
- ULS-L
- ACRL Chapters' officers (43 email addresses)
- ACRL-NW (Pacific Northwest)
- Medical Library Association
- Arizona Library Association
- California Library Association
- Massachusetts Library Association
- New York Library Association
- Pennsylvania Library Association

Potential interviewees completed a screening questionnaire to ensure they matched the target group. (See Appendices B & C for the consent form and screening content.) The interview schedule and logistics were pilot-tested with a library staff person from the University of California, Berkeley, taking their feedback into account before deploying the final version of the interview protocol.

Respondents were interviewed by phone or Google Meet during a 3-week period in May–June 2020, a time during which, unexpectedly, most participants had just

experienced a 1–2 month closure or disruption of their workplace due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents were told that they could respond either based on their situation before the pandemic, or their current situation, or both, and asked to specify which period they were referring to. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, based on a defined set of questions (see Appendix D), but flexible to allow for staff interests. Most sessions had two team members interviewing the respondent, and each was audio recorded on two devices, to avoid data loss. Audio recordings were then transferred to a secure Box drive folder and deleted from local devices. A student employee was hired specially for this project and trained to transcribe the interviews, in part to fulfill a condition of the grant funding to provide student involvement, and in part to support the professional growth of the student. During transcription, the student highlighted areas of the transcripts that might identify subjects. A primary investigator on the project then reviewed each transcript for consistent formatting and redacted identifying information, to produce a clean final transcript for coding. After interviewing, each participant received a $25 gift card to Powell's Bookstore to thank them for their assistance. Respondents were also asked whether they would like to receive a list of resources with workplace and emotional support information; the list is available in Appendix E.

MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software, was used to highlight quotes of interest and explore themes. Grounded theory methodology was followed, focusing on three main processes of analysis: (1) open coding, in which the interview content is analyzed line by line in order to identify common themes, categories, and sub-categories, (2) axial coding, in which relationships between categories are identified and re-identified, and (3) identifying a core category and extracting a grounded theory that applies to the information collected (Noble & Mitchell, 2016). The first two parts of this process were iterative and team-based, with team members performing coding separately and then merging and shaping the final agreed-upon coding schemes. For the third part of the process, due to the richness and depth of the content, once the main coding schemes had been confirmed, each member selected a topic area on which to focus (management styles and cultures, the central focus of this article, being one of them). In the results section below, the detailed coding, data analysis, and reporting on issues of management impact on staff morale were thus all performed by the first author.

Classic grounded theory methodology calls for an additional round of data collection to confirm the extracted theory, but due to time and financial constraints on this limited-term grant, this has not yet been added to the process. The themes and theoretical model derived from the data are fully outlined in the results section below.

Composition of sample

The research team interviewed 34 academic library staff members. Maximal geographic and demographic diversity was sought, resulting in a convenience sample drawn from 23 colleges or universities in 16 states. Recruiting was targeted to mirror regional population percentages of the United States according to US Census Data while understanding that perfect alignment would probably not be possible for a qualitative study. As shown in Figure 1, the West and Midwest census regions were over-represented, and the Northeast

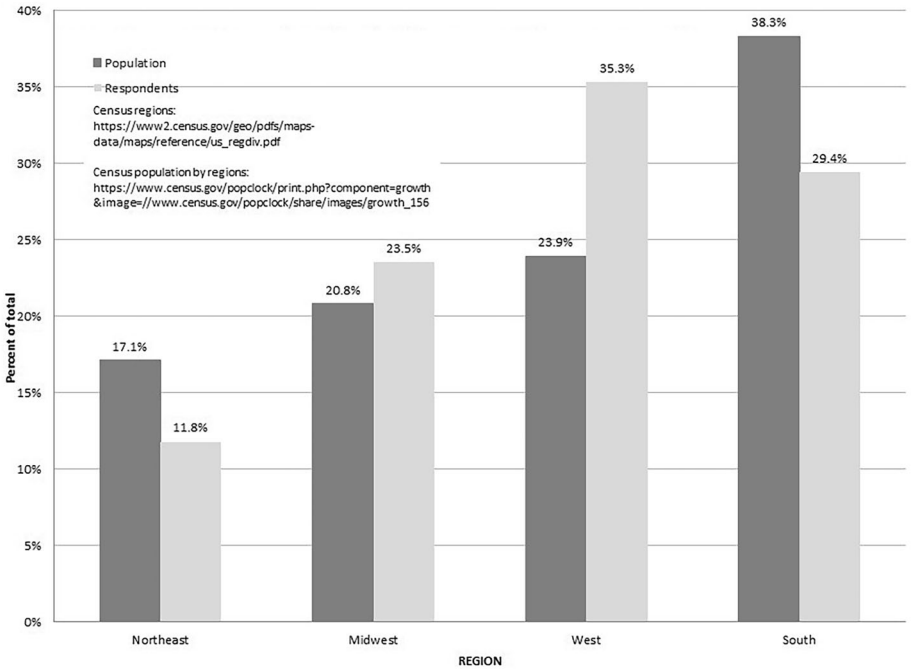


Figure 1. Regional distributions, comparing population and respondent percentages.

and South were under-represented in the sample, according to Census Bureau regional definitions and population data (United States Census Bureau, 2021a, 2021b).

Of the 34 staff members interviewed, 7 were from private institutions. The remainder were from public institutions, resulting in a substantial overrepresentation of public education, according to National Center for Educational Statistics information (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Enrollment & Carnegie classifications show that larger institutions were also overrepresented; this information is shown in Figure 2 (Carnegie Classifications, n.d.). The overrepresentation of public and of larger institutions is arguably a more important issue than the regional distribution divergences and should be considered a limitation of this study.

Respondents were asked to self-identify their gender and race, if they were willing to and in whatever way they wanted to, without the research team providing categories. Of 34 staff members interviewed, 24 identified as female, 4 as male, and 2 as non-binary or gender queer. There were five staff members of color, who self-identified as Black, African, Asian, Latinx/South American descent (generalizing from particular ethnic identities to protect the confidentiality of respondents who have few ethnic peers in academic libraries). While this proportion may match that of library staffing patterns overall, and while the team did not actively seek to recruit BIPOC staff members to interview, this is also a limitation of this study. The morale of BIPOC staff members (BIPOC represents Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and is the term used by several of the interviewees) is likely to diverge strongly from that of White staff members, based on the similar case among librarians reported by Kaetrena Davis Kendrick and Ione T. Damasco (Kendrick & Damasco, 2019). Any future additional data collection

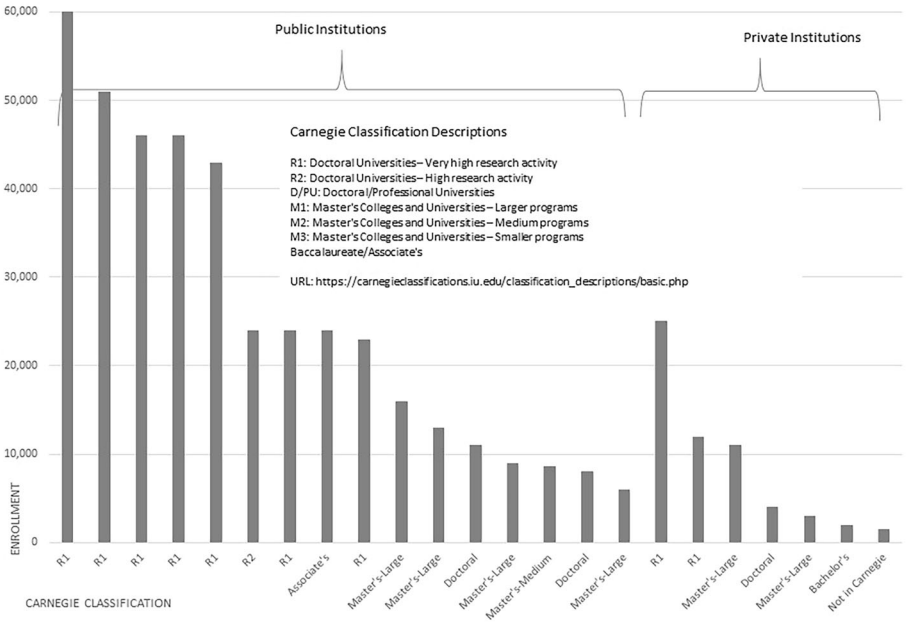


Figure 2. Enrollment and Carnegie Classifications of respondents' institutions.

related to this study will oversample BIPOC staff to ensure their perspectives are more adequately explored and represented.

Of those interviewees who volunteered their age/range, about half were below age 40, and half above. When asked about educational background, nine respondents reported having an MLIS and 6 are considering pursuing one; 9 have other advanced degrees. In terms of income and class, 12 respondents mentioned being working class and/or financially constrained, with 4 respondents mentioning student loans as a constraining factor on career and education.

Results

As part of the grounded theory methodology, a group of themes was extracted, related to the topic of library organization and management issues reported by interviewees. This was an iterative process, which adhered closely to the content of the interviews. Team members wrote memos and thought pieces to ensure that reactions and ideas were tracked, while impressions of the interviewees' words and the interview process were still fresh.

This process meant that some of the original questions and hypotheses as to how management and morale operate in the library setting needed to be altered or abandoned. Specifically:

1. without really realizing it the team had conceptualized library organizational structures as linear and vertical hierarchies, but the interviewees demonstrated how many of them are better characterized as horizontal networks and webs;

2. the team assumed that most library staff are seeking positional upward mobility, but that is often not the case—rather, better compensation and working conditions may be the goal in many cases;
3. the team underestimated the significant proportion of staff positions that relate to outreach, communication, and other services which do not relate directly to the collection or the patrons;
4. interviewees made clear the extent to which having a supportive direct boss is central to high morale;
5. not surprisingly, and powerfully, the few BIPOC interviewees made clear how much the experience of being a BIPOC staff person in the White-dominated world of libraries negatively affects morale, hierarchy position notwithstanding.

Themes which emerged related to management

- Staff members' relationships with their direct manager, on a continuum from actively harmful, to actively supportive.
- Staff members' experiences of the workplace, from actively harmful to actively supportive.
- Staff members' relationships with colleagues (at all levels), from negative to positive.
- The degree to which staff members report autonomy and flexibility in their work (permission/ability to take on projects, do professional development, etc.).
- Degree to which senior leadership is seen as impacting both direct manager's and staff members' work (includes the degree of power the direct manager is seen as having within the leadership structure).

Coding related to adjacent categories was also performed, including:

- Self-reported overall morale level.
- Whether librarians at the institution held faculty status.
- The respondent's position title and the organizational distance (measured in hierarchy levels) between the respondent and the highest position related to their library.

Theoretical model

As part of grounded theory methodology, the first author created a theoretical model of the avenues which impact library staff morale within organizational structures. It appears in Figure 3. There are a number of notable features that emerged from the data and are shown in the model. Among them are:

- The number of avenues that have impacts on library staff members is greater than for any other role and could result in a feeling of oppression coupled with lack of control if not counterbalanced by managers up the hierarchy

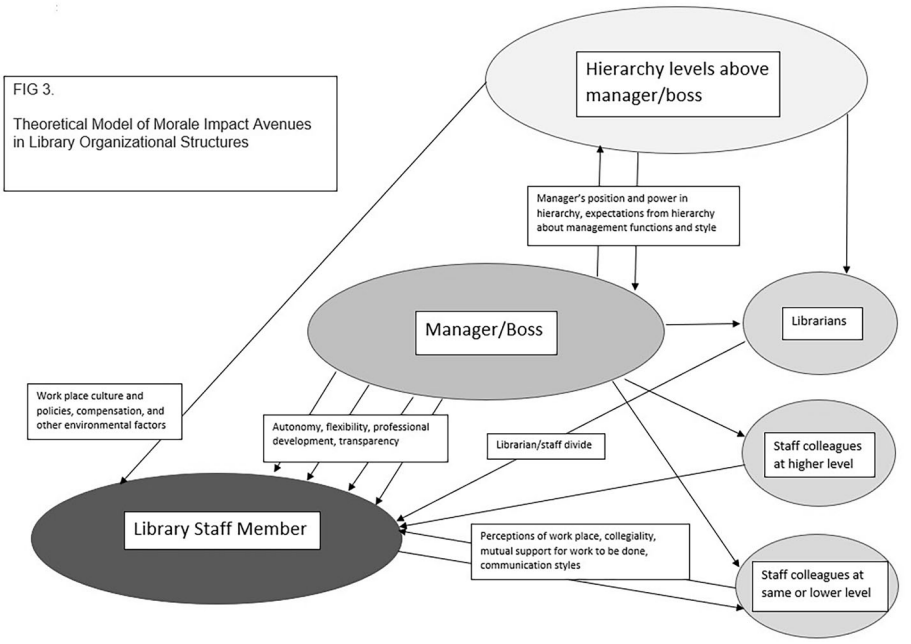


Figure 3. Theoretical model of morale impact avenues in library organizational structures.

- The number of avenues that flow directly from the highest level to the staff member; these include workplace policies and compensation which the direct boss may have little or no control over
- The number of avenues that flow from the direct manager/boss to the staff member; these are central aspects of reported morale, incorporating autonomy, flexibility, professional development, and transparency
- The importance, as noted by respondents, of the degree to which their direct supervisor has the power within the hierarchy (and, concomitantly, whether they are willing to exercise it to advocate for staff)
- The powerful impact of the librarian/staff divide; one avenue of many, but an often-mentioned one
- The impact of interactions with same- and lower-level colleagues as playing a part in morale

Findings

This study originally set out to explore a narrow range of questions related to library hierarchies and how staff positionality within them relates to library staff morale. However, in the course of analyzing and responding to the data, the scope was expanded to include a wider conceptualization of the research focus and a broader list of factors that impact staff morale.

The findings fall into five main categories, or themes, which emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts. Adjacent categories were also analyzed: these are self-

reported morale, whether librarians have faculty status, and the organizational distance between the staff member and the library director or dean.

Self-reported morale; faculty status of librarians; organizational distance

Starting with three of the results of adjacent category coding (level of morale, whether librarians at the institution have faculty status, and organizational distance from the library director) can provide important context for the main findings.

Most importantly, of this convenience sample of 34 library staff members self-reporting their level of morale, about two-thirds (21 of 34) reported their morale was anywhere from "pretty good" to "fabulous." This was a surprise; the team expected that people would self-select to participate due to low morale, but in this study, such was not the case. This lends power to the respondents' suggestions for increasing morale since they are coming from staff members with higher morale levels. It also means that future research may want to focus, as some of the current librarian morale studies do, on people who self-identify as having low morale, in order to explore this important phenomenon more deeply among library staff. It also means that caution should be exercised in comparing findings from this study, which did not pre-select for morale level, with any study that explicitly selected for low morale.

One finding of note was that when library staff were asked questions that differentiated between job satisfaction and morale, this study's participants had no trouble answering those questions separately and often considered them separately in thinking about their work. Many remarked that they had strong and specific motivations for being in what they identified as positions which created low morale, and were often very satisfied with the jobs themselves, due to their intrinsic rewards. Low morale was due to a combination of factors, as will be outlined below, but manager, team, and coworker relationships were the most-cited. As one participant noted: "my morale is lower than my job satisfaction and part of that is because of the day-to-day experience of the job, and it comes from this divide which I've talked about, with the faculty and staff in the library."

Of the 21 interviewees who reported on whether librarians were faculty, 18 (90%) said yes. This is an overrepresentation of the percentage overall, which, as reported by the American Library Association and depending on the type of library, hovers at about 20% (American Library Association, 2019). Future research might want to focus on what impact this factor has on staff morale.

Of the 27 respondents for whom organizational distance from the library director could be calculated, 2 were one level down, 19 were either two or three levels down from library director/dean, and 6 were four or five levels down. In the coding, the organizational distance was not identified as a factor affecting morale, as was hypothesized originally, but since the sample was not representative in other ways, this too could be an avenue for future research. Depending on organization size, there can be up to six levels above a staff member, and often some below, so even if the distance is not the driving factor, policy implementation can be challenging. One aspect of hierarchy location not explored in this study is that library staff are often supervisors themselves, of students and sometimes other staff, and yet the supports they need as managers are often lacking. In addition, as mentioned above, library staff positions are

not necessarily located in the "spine" of a hierarchy but instead are located in adjacent units such as communications, outreach to the community, event planning, project management, instructional supports, and more. These groups may have different morale and support concerns, which could be a fruitful avenue for further research.

Relationship with direct manager

Library staff interviewees stated repeatedly, and in no uncertain terms, the strong difference it makes to have a direct manager they feel is supportive, will fight for them, will listen to and respond to their concerns, and whom they can trust. It was one of the most direct connections revealed in these interviews; this is not surprising and has strong implications for improving morale by improving managerial performance as a central strategy.

Interviewees reported that manager rapport and having someone with whom they could talk about their work issues and personal status was a central facet of their morale. When asked who they would go to first with a work-related problem, a substantial majority said they would go to their direct supervisor (the research team expected that more staff would go to colleagues first, but this was not the case with this sample). A manager who is committed to the staff member's professional development and advancement is also a central factor.

> I straight talked to my boss. I have a good rapport with her so it was easy for me to be like 'You gotta give me a break.' So, she told the higher ups that they needed to lower their expectations or get more help. It was very helpful, I love my boss.

> So, I always feel really really supported by her and I always feel like even in my moments when I'm struggling really really hard, I can always reach out to her and say I'm struggling and I need to take half a day to breathe. And I think that's been impacting my morale overall and making my morale a lot higher, because I think that if I were in an environment where I couldn't be vocal and say I'm having a rough day right now, today's a hard day and I just need to take it easy, I would be in much worse shape for sure.

> He's the boss I've been waiting for my whole life. I honestly feel like at a deep level that if he'd been the first boss I had, it would've been so much harder because I would have always known how awesome it could be. And maybe it's best to have those later. But I wonder where I would have been or what I'd have done if he was my first boss. Because he's very uplifting and he knows he's putting a lot of money into people to get their training, and that they're leaving and going to other places. And he thinks that's great.

On the other hand, an unsupportive manager can drive employees away, and the low morale that results can infuse an entire work environment. Several of the study participants noted that one's morale may only be as dependable as a current manager's tenure, and said they would likely leave if their manager left. Harmful managerial behaviors include micromanagement, defensiveness, demeaning attitudes, and withholding of accommodations for needs such as professional education, caregiving, or medical issues. Being unavailable to offer assistance was another behavior that was frequently mentioned, creating a sense of isolation and disconnection among employees.

> If I had a really supportive manager when I got there would I have probably stayed? Yeah, I probably would have made it work. I would have missed people here but management, I mean management plays a huge role in your daily life and we spend so many hours at work, it's just crucial.

> My service group leader does not like to ruffle feathers. It's a very toe-the-line kind of mentality. I also feel like I get micromanaged a lot. And because she's so preoccupied with not ruffling feathers, not stepping on toes, she gets defensive when she feels like I'm encroaching on what she believes is her responsibility.

> My morale was a little low because I felt like I had done so much work and wasn't getting very far on the project I was working on. And I'm fueled by completing things, like I really enjoy completing projects. I often didn't know how to bring up problems with my boss … There was sometimes tension within the dynamics with the supervisor and the others, and I didn't have a friend in the office. There was no one I could talk to about it.

Relationships with colleagues

Library staff members are also impacted by the teams and colleagues with whom they work. One often-noted aspect of library staff life is the impact on morale from other staff members who are resistant to change of any kind. This can take the form of hesitating to get training, and hesitating to take on new roles and responsibilities, but sometimes can even take the form of pushback against a staff member who seems to be stepping out of their role, especially toward professional advancement.

> She was at the library for over 40 years, and she seemed to have a hard time dealing with new things coming along in the library, so she kind of dragged her feet doing new things. And she didn't really like doing new things … When she didn't want to do the newer things, it kind of slowed us down.

> So, even though library administration is so proactive and trying to get these skills, they're not all interested and it's almost like there's some folks digging their heels in, and are like 'That's so great that you all are learning all those skills that's lovely, but I'm just gonna keep doing my job'.

However (besides staff members' relationships with their direct managers), by far the most powerful impact on morale was the result of the librarian-staff divide. Even interviewees whose morale was high reported experiences of being treated as "less than," as "being at the kids' table," as being consistently disrespected through microaggressions aimed at them by librarians, whether intentionally or not. Many staff try to structure their work and influence their organization, but report that they are often blocked by librarians. While some librarians are collaborative, others are dismissive, cherry-pick the good tasks, and dump "lower status" work on staff.

In fact, in response to the screening question about why people were interested in participating in the study, many noted that they were not usually validated in this way, and they wanted to be part of a project that was hearing and representing their voices. While there was not as much variation as the team hoped in order to compare settings in which librarians have faculty status to those which do not, the sense is that the divide is worse in settings where librarians are faculty, presumably because they are structurally incentivized to align to upper levels of the hierarchy.

To the extent that institutions support the divide, and these behaviors, through structural and cultural means, they are contributing directly to low morale experiences among library staff.

> We're treated like the hired hands sometimes. And that's just insulting, I guess. I recognize I don't have the degree, I don't have that expertise that they do, but … I do actually have

> to do other things and I have other work that is also important … I know what [librarians] learn in library school and it's not the same stuff that I do. And I certainly don't blame them for not wanting my job. There's plenty of parts about it that are frustrating. It's a lot of managing people, which they don't have to do. But somehow they don't recognize that they can't speak into my job. They still want to have an opinion about what I'm doing or how I'm doing it, whether or not they are familiar with what exactly I have to do.

> [The boundary between librarians and staff is] as permeable as the librarians want it to be. What we have found in [our] department is that when a librarian from another group needs help, then we're all one big family. However, when staff need help on projects, the librarians are too busy and say it's really not their job. So, it's definitely a feeling of … it's a one-way mirror. Like you can always be seen but you can't always be heard. A one-way gate is a good way to put it.

> The divide is more between staff and faculty. They definitely think very highly of their faculty status. They get to sit in on different committees and all that. And obviously, the information that they know is highly valued. The university information that they know is very valuable to them. And it's very obvious that our opinions on things aren't taken into account. Like it doesn't even occur to them to ask us 'Hey what do you think about this?' even though we're the ones who are doing the day-to-day work and are the best ones to answer the question.

> It's more of librarians wanting recognition for their work, that they need to differentiate themselves. But the effect is the 'Oh, but you're not one of us' … in meetings … The librarians, whether it's a function of position or personality, very much feel like they can speak into my area and should. Although structurally I don't report to them … Yeah, it's hard to say what's a function of structure and what's a function of personalities and what is just sort of historical … I don't feel great about it. I've said this to the university librarian before, he knows there is definitely a divide between librarians and staff in who gets listened to, who feels comfortable demanding that people listen to them … There's still just … a feeling of hierarchy there … From my perspective it almost comes down to mental health. You can be strong and you could bowl [the librarians] over, but they might still make your life a nightmare. They're smart, capable people, they make huge contributions. They just don't know where to stop contributing. So, I think it's keeping them as partners, but also recognizing that they've been there forever and they're not gonna change. And that they should be there, and they do really good work.

Some of the treatment that library staff members receive from librarians is actively demeaning. Not only is this totally unacceptable, but it is misguided as well; many of the staff interviewees themselves supervised staff and students, and were responsible for training and mentoring the students who might become the next generation of librarians.

> This is the other thing about working in academic libraries. The students are treated like they're really intelligent, and they are bright kids, but … like there was a cleaning day and the supervisor asked me if I could take the gum off of the table and he said he didn't want his students to do it because he didn't want them to waste time because they're smarter than that. I wanted to say '**** you I'm smarter than that too!' But all I said was 'No I'm not removing the gunk from your table, find someone else to do it'.

> I don't know if I can point to the very overt 'Oh you're not a librarian'. It's not … a lot of it is unspoken, it's by the structures, it's how … You know, I think we're still kind of treated like the kids. Like, just little things like a copier that does not sit in my department. It sits back in technical services. We do help facilitate the public printers and by extension the staff printer, but also, we're all capable adults. I was sitting at my desk in

> another area of the library in the middle of doing something, and one of the librarians walked up to me and was like 'the printer is out of paper'. And I was like 'What?' The paper is sitting right next to it. This is not somebody that's twenty years old and never learned how to use a printer because it was obsolete. This is a person who's ten years older than I am, and she felt like that was my job to go do. And if there was a student worker sitting right next to her that she asked, and she had to rush off to class or something, that would be a totally different thing. But that was a "you do this, so I can use this."
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> The person who was applying for the [librarian] job said 'Well, how long do I sit at the reference desk?' and they said 'You'll never sit there more than two hours. We would never do that to you!' And I was thinking, what am I? Every person who's pissed off at the world, I'm dealing with them 8 hours a day. And [a librarian] can't handle it for two hours?

Not surprisingly, the positionality and experiences leading to low morale are magnified enormously if the staff member identifies as BIPOC.

> [Being BIPOC] has definitely had an impact on me. I can't really consider my colleagues to be my friends because of that. And that's fine, I've come to peace with that. I have other friends. But it took me a long time because I'm so much of a community person that I'm like 'We're all gonna get along it's gonna be great!' You're not all gonna get along, it's not all just gonna be great. And so diversity and equity and inclusion issues are very important to me. And we didn't, when I first arrived [here], there weren't even trainings on that. But the most common one is how ethnic I am, and why am I here … It's just stereotyping I guess. I may have been denied opportunities based on that, there's no way that I will ever know for sure.
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> I am a minority. I'm not gonna blame everything on being a minority … which is also a life thing, which is, I'm really tired of the way I'm treated and I can't say it's really a [university] thing. But I was really surprised when I started at [this library] how many people were rude and unfriendly to me. Because I thought well it's not a minimum wage job … it's a library, I was really surprised and it made me feel insecure … You know like with racism, every situation is not really gonna be about racism, but I'm so used to it and you react sometimes … I used to join committees or be asked to join them but … you know when people take your ideas, or that subtle thing where you do something important, and they thank you but they thank you for something really insignificant? And it's not always intentional. But I think when people take your ideas, I think they really believe sometimes that it was their idea … When people don't listen to me … what I'll do is I'll go through someone else because I know they'll take that person more seriously.

Autonomy and flexibility

Autonomy and flexibility refer to the degree to which library staff can determine the way they carry out job responsibilities, the content of their work, and the timing and scheduling involved. While librarians often enjoy considerable autonomy and flexibility, many library staff report that they have the same work-life balance challenges as librarians, but are allowed less control over their job content and schedules. While the nature of staff job responsibilities is given as part of the reason for this by administrators, the research team also heard from interviewees whose managers handled requests supportively and creatively. Since opportunities to flex schedules, in particular, can be an important motivation for workers, this can aid in staff retention. It is also an equity issue and can increase a staff member's sense of organizational justice to be treated equally to librarians, which in turn improves morale.

In fact, some study participants mentioned that they are not interested in library work long-term, which means that working conditions and supports are being critically appraised in considering whether or not to leave. This decision is easily tipped toward leaving if the workplace is toxic and/or the employee has low morale. Other personal factors such as caregiving and family responsibilities, and financial concerns such as student loans, also play a role here. In particular, educational aspirations can be an important avenue for the flexibility offered to staff members. The majority of staff interviewees either had an advanced degree or were in a graduate degree program (both for the MLIS and in other subjects). These staff members report that they see education as an important next step for their careers. Support for employees' career paths and growth can take many forms, with being able to flex schedules being one avenue and financial support another. Some staff members noted that they would like to pursue an advanced degree, but they could not afford an MLIS on their wages and they could not get assistance from their institution (which might or might not have an MLIS program).

> Honestly, it's those students that keep me there. I mean, that's the part of it that's so invigorating and rewarding. Sometimes I call myself a glorified camp counselor. There's a huge mentorship aspect to the job, and teaching people how to have jobs and walking with them through that really pivotal stage in life, that's the part of it that I love.

> I like working at the university. I don't care that I'm making minimum wage … I like the health insurance they offer. I like that my family can take college classes. I like that I get to live on campus. There's so many benefits for working at the university that I was always willing to take the lesser choice for the security that the university offered. But also, there's this huge cultural aspect of working in the university. I meet people from all over the United States, all over the continent, all over the world. And it's just changed my perspective as someone that has never left the country.

> Because every time I've tried to go back for a higher paycheck, I've regretted it. So happiness and work life balance is way more important to me. And if that means not having a piece of paper or some letters behind my name, I guess that'll have to do. But I'm hoping the two can converge.

Interviewees reported on their educational plans while acknowledging that these days educational attainment does not guarantee career progression. It leads to the question, how can library staff ensure career growth, if more education may not pay off? Several study participants noted that they had never seen a staff person gain the MLIS and get a librarian position at the same university; it seemed that staff had to leave their institution in that case. It also raises the question of how people can plan when even lateral moves, or role changes within positions, can create job precarity, and local opportunities may be few and far between. The words "I feel stuck" were uttered too often in the interviews.

> There's a lot of… because there's a library school that has a satellite in town that a lot of us went through. A lot of people latch onto this university like "this is it, this is the place that you go." But they end up coming into interim positions. They come in low level staff positions thinking that they'll eventually climb and either jump to the librarian side or move up, and that is not often the case.

> In 15 years, I've only known one staff member that was able to make that jump and go from leading an [access] department, to getting her master's degree in library science, and

> leading over to being a tenure track librarian. because for the rest of us that had master's degrees, or got master's degrees while working, if we wanted to become a professional librarian, we would have really had to leave our university.

> That's part of my morale thing, my soapbox I get on with morale. What is the point? You come in here, we get you trained, we like you, but you're not really thrilled with your job … But we're not gonna let you move anywhere else. You're stuck where you are for the rest of your life. Or, you go somewhere else … So we were working on really, what we're gonna do for our strategic plan for our everything, and I was just told that morale should not be part of this. How you feel about your job is not part of governance.

Role changes were mentioned by many study participants, and are ubiquitous in the rapidly shifting academic library landscape. In addition, role blurring has been a concern in academic libraries for some years, with library staff increasingly taking on roles that were previously only handled by librarians (sometimes by choice, sometimes not). This can create tensions between librarians and library staff, as there are territory concerns and fear of loss of authority on the part of librarians. In fact, there are considerably more library staff than librarians working in academic libraries. Yet, when they handle more and more of the fundamental content and responsibility of making the library run, including activities that overlap with those traditionally reserved for librarians, their pay and evaluations often do not reflect the shift over time, an omission—and injustice—that some lay squarely at the feet of those same librarians.

> It formally recognized what was necessary, which was that many, many staff take on the roles that were traditionally under the purview of professional librarians, just because of the necessity of being a large institution where there's just not enough librarians to go around.

> [We have] two librarians left. Instead of having another librarian learn or help out in that department, they pick a staff member to pretty much do a librarian's job, but not give them the raise or anything. And we had a lot of issues with that. … And the circulation manager pretty much became what the librarian would do, but she didn't get a pay raise and she was doing that well over a year.

> There's a lot of new librarians that just joined that are library faculty and then there's a lot of staff that have been working there for 30 years and as they see that what we're doing is kind of reducing collections, which is what we are all doing, and that was their legacy, it's what they just spent 30 years doing, that tension is very difficult. They're not all well poised or interested in getting some of the new training.

Role changes, whether desired, assigned, in process, or some combination, require training. Staff members report that accommodating training needs is not always a given, but can be done where the administration is willing. Additionally (depending on staff motivations for being in their jobs), professional development funding and accommodation in general, not just that for needed job training, is something staff generally see as positive—it reduces the sense of being stuck. Even if it can be challenging for managers, the improved productivity, knowledge contributions, and justice and morale benefits to equitable professional development benefits—including courses, webinars, professional development funds, tech, and device reimbursement—can be a huge plus for the institution. Administration and managers need to communicate clearly and be on the same page about how this can work on the ground, as opportunities for one staff member should not come at the expense of another.

> I have definitely seen a couple people … that took advantage of the opportunities. And you could see that the administration liked that, but the supervisor really didn't because it was taking them away from the work at the desk. And obviously that makes their colleagues do more work at the desk while they're taking advantage of those opportunities.

> You can see your supervisor both being frustrated with the person that's like 'I'm never going to do anything' because their supervisor is like 'Why is your staff member not participating in anything?' And then there's the other person and they're like 'Can you just work a desk shift. I know you signed up for like 6 committees, but that's not your job'. And it seems to depend on people—if the administration likes you and what you're doing and that's it. I've seen them be both very flexible and accommodating, and very not.

> What I'm saying is that if I leave where I am now, they may decide I have to do other things. I don't know what it would be, but they would say 'Okay, well you need to have certain responsibilities like some of the librarians have, like on certain committees or they have to do extra work'. I'm not sure that I would want to do that. One thing is when I work I work alone, I love my work, but I don't have to be on all these committees. I don't have extra responsibilities.

Staff interviewees reported that while they have consideration for the position of managers trying to balance competing demands, it still seems that administration may offer better opportunities to librarians than staff, as well as to more outgoing personality types. This favoritism has a negative impact on library staff.

> There are a lot of learning opportunities and there's a really nice tuition support program. And there's activities happening all the time, like different groups will be hosting things for all staff in the library that are learning opportunities, or just engaging opportunities. It's clear that like, so the administration will do all these events and promotions for the whole library. And they want people to come, and they want people to people them, and they want people to organize them. And that looks good for the library and it's good for staff who can go. But if you are a staff member whose job depends on your physical presence, then it's harder to go to those events. And it's really hard for a supervisor to make it equitable.

> Favoritism is definitely usually shown to people being go getter, all in in the library, 'I'm [on lots of] committees, I want leadership in every committee, I want to make these programs and everything'. So then, on the other hand, you might have an older person or a way more introverted person and they're quiet and they just wanna come and they wanna do their job. And maybe at some point, some computer training passed them by, or they've been at the library the whole time and the new people who came, they have all these new technological skills and they don't invest on getting everybody up to marks in those particular skills.

> The new library dean is a lot more hands on, which brings its own issues of like … we used to have more flexibility, but now we have somebody who's actually interested in what we're doing and keeping it consistent across all the people.

Impacts of senior leadership

Library staff members were clear about the interrelationships between senior leadership and their own managers, and how those impacted their own work situation and morale. They acknowledged that there can be good managers at any point in the hierarchy, but unless they are very high up, one person cannot impact the entire organization. Also, there are enough levels, in some places, between the highest at the lowest that there are

many ways in which positive high-level initiatives can become diluted by the time they reach staff. In fact, some staff noted the preponderance of middle managers even in times of staff layoffs. In most places staff does not have access to the ear of the highest-level administrators, meaning they may have less of a feeling of agency and voice. However, some staff noted that it was sometimes better to fly under the radar; too much attention from management could take the form of micromanaging and other types of control.

Given these vulnerabilities, the sense of having a direct manager who is willing to take concerns up the hierarchy toward senior leadership, and advocate for staff needs, make staff feel safer. Direct managers often must educate senior leadership as to staff roles and responsibilities; staff reported feeling as though administration incorrectly saw them as interchangeable, and did not know what their work consisted of (as compared to librarians, whose work is more highly respected in part because it is considered not to be interchangeable). This could have impacts on issues such as flexible schedules to accommodate family responsibilities or professional development; upper-level management might tend to handle schedules without knowing the complexities involved, with a negative impact on customer service. Staff also felt that administration easily forgot that, especially as librarians move into consultation and instruction away from the reference desk, staff do much of the direct service toward students, a prime user group for the library.

Another factor interviewees noted was that decisions and trends at the university level (beyond the library) can also have an impact on their work and positions. The financial impacts of COVID and the coming "demographic cliff" with potential huge declines in student attendance are two examples of this.

> So, I feel like she would advocate for me but if there was any sort of push back from the university librarian or any of the service group leaders, I'm not 100% certain that she'd be able to stand her ground or defend against them.

> With our contact in the provost's office, the director has had to work with him significantly to have him even understand what we're talking about. He didn't really get the library … It's been a learning experience for him.

> My boss also is faculty, and the director of my department is staff as well. He's worked hard to have us be viewed as equals, at least in my department, but he can't control the other departments.

> Over the years, my university has gotten more hierarchical, which is actually very hard for me, not to talk to people one-to-one. That's the only thing that's really hard for me, is that where I saw other libraries and universities flatten their organizational structure and become more dynamic in flattening it … I actually saw mine, over the last 5 years, become more peaks and valleys. I have to go into a building and that manager had an issue with me and didn't speak to me about it. He talked to his boss, his boss talked to their boss and their boss talked to associate university librarian. That person talked to another boss that was in charge of my area, that then talked to my boss and then talked to me. And I was just like 'Oh my god, you guys have been talking about this for the last 3 weeks and all that could have happened is we could have had a 30-minute conversation mano a mano, and gotten this taken care of!'

One of the points at which staff feel most vulnerable, and report being locked out of decision-making, is during organizational restructuring. Several interviewees reported

frequent and recent reorganizations of departments and jobs, leading to feelings of work precarity, low morale, and staff turnover (which in turn added workload for remaining staff). COVID has, unavoidably, in some cases, exacerbated this phenomenon. A related issue is trying to get reclassified within one's own position when work responsibilities have increased or changed; several study participants noted the barriers to reclassification, especially in larger settings, even with a supportive manager.

> That would be the main thing that drags morale down, the budget cuts and layoffs. We've been furloughed too. I mean I've been with the university almost three years. We've been furloughed, we've gone through two rounds of layoffs and it's been three years. So that's a big drain on morale.

> They just did that without talking to us about it. So … and then afterward they were like 'If you have feelings about it we can talk about that. We love your info, we love your ideas' and the three of us kind of were like 'Well you didn't ask for our ideas before so … I'm happy to share them with you but it doesn't feel like it's going to change anything that's already decided'. So, with stuff like that I'm kind of not that satisfied. Even beforehand, there's definitely a feeling in the library that faculty opinions really get listened to and staff opinions sometimes get listened to when it's to the advantage of the admin or the faculty. But it's hard to … it's hard because admin and everybody says they want to listen, but whether we will actually see an outcome to that is not always clear … now it's hard for me to listen with a genuine ear to what the admin has to say.

> The hardest thing about morale at work is when the library as a whole, or when the university as a whole, goes through an organizational restructure or a very major change, and they don't tend to take the input of the lower staff people. Over and over, we hear that paraprofessional staff, especially those that maybe don't have a senior or lead or specialist or advanced extra words and extra titles, that they aren't stakeholders in the organization. And that is so incredibly frustrating, because I think a lot of people care about their job and they want to do a good job. But when you sort of reinforce the idea that your opinion doesn't matter, or what you do doesn't matter to the whole overall operation, that's really demeaning.

> Even three levels of advocacy wasn't gonna get an actual tangible outcome. It was just gonna get a very clear example of 'Okay I feel like I've done the best that I can to earn this reclassification' and it still almost didn't happen. So, to me that was signaling of the structure of the university isn't gonna allow the wiggle room that I want career advancement wise. Even with all those people advocating for me.

Financial and budget woes have long been a constant in libraries, and COVID and its uncertainties did not help matters. However, staff members report that administrators seem not to understand the level of personal financial hardship that they experience daily. There were many reports of librarians being shocked at how little staff members are paid, and the way administration makes decisions about and communicates priorities around budget cuts and layoffs are direct indicators to staff about whether they are valued and their work is secure, necessary, and respected.

> But when I applied to be an entry level cataloger … minimum wage in my state is $12 an hour. And entry level catalogers make [a few cents more]. And they were asking for people that were multilingual, that had library experience, that had … I like cried, because I had been sheltered in the area of access services for so long. I had no idea how much catalogers were diminished in their role and their appreciation.

> Again, almost all the librarians were saying, 'Could we just maybe have less of a raise and just keep the databases that we want?' They were like, 'we could deal with that in finance.'

> And [a staff member] said, 'Do you know how much less we get paid than you guys?' Going from a 5% to a 3% raise is huge for us. The looks on their faces were so distraught, like, wait a minute. It was almost as if they didn't expect us to not be getting paid the same amount.

> And I really love what I'm doing but our staffing is a terrible situation. We're down [about five] paraprofessional positions and [about five] librarians in the last 7 or 8 years. They keep cutting back… I know it's terrible. I love what I'm doing but it's very difficult to really do what needs to be done.

Experience of the workplace

Staff members overwhelmingly expressed how important clear and timely communication, especially about decision-making, is to their morale. Library communications, they reported, are often only directed at librarians, so staff has to find out about important developments which may actually affect them and their work, through indirect channels, which is frustrating. Several interviewees who are in workplaces where meeting agendas and notes are shared with all staff appreciated the chance to keep up to date and informed.

In addition, transparency about how decisions are made is an important component of assuring that all library workers are viewed as equal. This is easier if staff participate widely on library committees and projects, and if their voices have authority (some of the participants, while considered and considering themselves staff, sat on their library's leadership teams due to their roles, a setting in which their voices carried weight). Morale is improved when all are listened to after their input is actively solicited, and incorporated into decision-making. This is particularly true during staff reorganizations. When managers are perceived as controlling, out of touch, or afraid of change, and hoarding information without sharing, morale is lowered.

> Now we get agendas, we just got one this morning, and the minutes from the library leadership team meetings. And I think it has changed the relationship a bit and melted some of the tension.

> Before I came, they had a training at the library with a communications professional, and the first thing I noticed was these people are overcommunicating, I felt. But because we share broadly with an email [listserv to everyone in the library] … You hear about everything all the time, [and] in the end, things aren't slipping by anybody because we all got an email about it and there's information.

> We can have the opportunity to learn about things that are happening in the library world and not feel like there's this elite group who has access to all the knowledge, and they may or may not choose to share it with us.

> There are faculty who are in their offices and you don't see them move around much, I know there are rumblings among the staff about what exactly are the faculty librarians doing all day if they are in their offices all day?

Committee work can be an important way for any library employee both to offer service if they are so moved and to get to know the landscape of and colleagues at their library and institution. It can also be an avenue for improving staff morale; interviewees expressed more satisfaction in their work when they could work with librarian peers on a team project, and when they felt their voices were taken into account in real ways

(beyond lip service) in the library decision-making. It also decreases the sense of isolation staff report feeling for them to connect in this way, potentially lessening the librarian-staff divide. Importantly, shared committee participation may go a long way toward educating librarians about what staff do in their jobs, and their perspective (cross-training is another possibility for achieving this goal). Clear parameters should be set by managers as to participation; some study participants noted that the decisions and process for committee assignments often seemed politically tinged and not equitable.

> He encourages collaboration and has formed committees and task forces for different projects around campus and the library. And he always asks for volunteers and then forms diverse teams, with people from different units. So, I've worked with people whom I hadn't worked with before, and a mixture of faculty and staff. So, I think that has really helped mend some bridges between faculty and staff. And I know he's at least trying to promote teamwork and collaboration.

> A lot, almost, I would say all of the committees that we have, they always have a mixture on them. I don't ever feel like it's all librarians at all. I feel like our librarians that … our admin staff feel that it's really important to make sure we have different ideas coming from staff across the board, like employees across the board.

Finally, it is hard to overestimate the importance of the provision of a pleasant workspace, in line with what other library workers and librarians receive. Interviewees noted that the spaces in which they work communicate the degree to which their institution values them; not surprisingly, casting staff out of nicer, larger offices into smaller cubicles in favor of faculty/librarians is not a move calculated to improve staff morale.

> I enjoy that it's a very nice library, and it's big and it's spacious. In the hospital library I had a little teeny cubicle. It feels like, oh they really value the library. And that makes me feel good, working in the library where there's tons of space. That says something, when they give you a nice facility.

> They kicked all staff out of offices and put faculty in offices. So, I was kicked out of my office and put right back across the hall into my cubicle.

> I was kind of in the basement when I worked [there]. We were like in a secret back room that nobody could get to. We had a lot of pretty photos and stuff, but my morale was a little lower. I definitely had to boost it by bringing in podcasts and things to listen to.

Discussion

When this study was launched, the research team expected to identify a direct relationship between a library staff member's place in the library hierarchy and their morale. Instead, study findings revealed that morale depended more on organizational factors such as the ability to progress, workload, respect, and funding.

A key finding from this study is the pronounced extent to which feeling supported by and connected with an immediate boss is critical for high morale. Managers who support staff growth and autonomy are crucial, as is transparent communication from management at all levels. Staff who reported low morale were often in toxic settings or had micromanaging or unsupportive bosses. The changes in work duties and location during the pandemic often highlighted the differences between supportive and toxic bosses, with supportive bosses helping staff work around caregiving issues and

challenges with working remotely, and toxic ones expecting business as usual or adding pressures due to understaffing or fear of appearing unproductive.

Another key finding is the importance of respect and equity for all staff regardless of position or organizational level. It seems absurd that this needs to be stated, but the evidence is that it does. In particular, the librarian/staff divide was often mentioned, and as it is baked into many library organizational cultures and processes, can be challenging to address. At the very least, the onus is on librarians to "fill their own damn copier trays." Many of the respondents were not looking to librarians or management to give their work meaning, instead of finding their own rewards from being good at their job, loving working with students, having part-time jobs allowing work-life harmony, etc. However, they uniformly state that feeling they are not viewed as equals, or their work as being equally important, or their voices mattering and being incorporated into library processes, is extremely discouraging and creates lowered morale, even if job satisfaction is high.

How to improve staff morale

Based on these findings, the research team suggests three main sets of recommendations for improving library staff morale, in addition to organizational commitment to supportive management practices:

1. The first is to foster respectful *peer* collaboration between staff and librarians. This should be an explicitly stated organizational value, with consequences for non-adherence. As impossible as it may seem to legislate relationships and create emotional intelligence where it is lacking, there can be scaffolded processes which encourage this. For example, inclusion of library staff on all committees (and not as token representatives) is a start, as is cross-training of librarians to handle staff responsibilities as appropriate. Staff voices should be central to decision making, and not only listened to, but their suggestions implemented. Once again, librarians should at least be filling their own copier trays! Not every solution will work for every setting, but it's not acceptable to say, "our setting can't accommodate this"—there are many examples of approaches to seemingly intractable problems in both the library and the general workplace literature, that can be implemented if there is administrative support.
2. The second is for management at all levels to fight for fair pay, classification, job security, and work flexibility for staff. One of the more commonly cited workplace reasons for low morale was the extremely low pay and often precarious work arrangements of library staff. Even when job markets are tight and there are numerous job candidates for any opening, there is no reason that non-recognition of staff's value in their salary structures should create extreme financial hardship, which was heard as an issue from respondents in too many instances. Even if financial hardship is less extreme, financial barriers stand in the way of a number of the respondents seeking MLIS degrees or further professional education, thereby stranding them in sometimes dead-end positions. Additionally, staff schedules and accommodations for personal circumstances can be unforgiving,

which creates low morale and retention issues. Although this is extremely challenging, it is still clear that in order to improve morale (and retention), libraries should provide job security and flexible schedules that allow for caregiving to library staff, and ensure that those who can't afford an MLIS can still advance.

3. The third, related, recommendation is to provide professional development and opportunities for professional growth in the same ways that librarians receive them. This can include educational funds and paid conference leave. As mentioned above, staff should be invited to collaborate on committees and library initiatives, and at the very least, included in any discussions about potential library changes in ways that amplify their ideas and voices. Additionally, professionals grow and thrive in welcoming spaces, and staff should be provided with pleasant, well-lit workplaces and access to campus amenities. Respondents related more than one story about the isolation of staff geographically or placing them in sub-standard spaces while librarians had better locations and offices. This sends exactly the message to staff that one would expect, that they are not valued, which in turn contributes to low morale.

Limitations

As mentioned above, some major limitations of this research include the imbalanced distribution of staff respondents from public vs. private institutions, the dearth of BIPOC staff members included, and the timing of the study in relation to the pre- and post-COVID eras.

The timing of the study was both a limitation and an advantage, given that between the very beginning of the team's planning and applying for funding, in November 2019, to be ready to interview the first respondent, in May 2020, the SARS-CoV-2 virus changed the world as all knew it. Since the team was interviewing people nationwide, the interviews were always going to take place online; what was unexpected was that all of the respondents would be doing their interviews from home and that they would have technology that was sophisticated enough, in most cases, to easily handle online meetings. More importantly, it ended up that the study had captured one of the last opportunities to get a snapshot of pre-COVID library staff life; people were still in limbo, and talked about their regular jobs before any lockdowns, for the most part. If the timing had been even 1 month later, that might not have been the case.

In late May and early June of 2020, most staff expected to be back in their libraries and all to be normal by the end of summer 2020. Of course, that didn't happen, and whatever the timing, library re-openings and staff roles in them have been challenging and sometimes contentious. Looking ahead during COVID, many of the interviewees feared staff layoffs, and at the same time had to carry substantially increased workloads since students were not available to work and open staff positions were not being refilled. At the time they thought this was temporary but as it turned out, in the main it was not, and in many (most?) places, staff carried the brunt of the impact of COVID on libraries. The research team wishes its human subjects application had requested permission to re-interview the participants—even if only to check in with them. But how could anyone have known? At any rate, the interviews captured one of the final views

into pre-pandemic library staff life, with the additional simmering awareness of changes that might come.

Themes for future research

Several possibilities for future research on the topic of libraries' organizational structures and cultures are mentioned above. The research team also invites researchers to examine more closely what causes engagement vs. discouragement, and what opportunities for growth and professional development can best enhance library staff career trajectories. Some additional themes that emerged from interviews with this study's respondents include:

Selection and training of managers

This study has shown the central importance of manager practices and support in levels of staff morale. However, if management is seen only as an advancement in the library's hierarchy, or a reward for good performance, candidates may not be selected for the qualities which would make them good at the job, such as emotional intelligence, and they may not get adequate or appropriate training to be good managers once they are in the job. More research is needed about who becomes a library manager, why and how library advancement can mean that librarians feel they must be managers without assessing whether it is a good fit, what non-managerial avenues for advancement might look like, and what training is most needed and effective (relatedly, can emotional intelligence be improved through training?). Research should be inclusive of library staff (anyone in non-librarian titled positions) who are managers.

The librarian/staff divide

The disconnect between staff and librarians caused frustration amongst staff. As noted above, many staff try to structure their work and influence their organization, but report that they are often blocked by librarians, some of whom are collaborative while others are dismissive. Research on this topic could explore manifestations of microaggressions such as snubbing. It could also draw on the literature on bullying in library settings, as well as the critical librarianship literature and general literature on typical dysfunctions in library settings. Examining differences in urban and rural settings and in smaller, private institutions could also be fruitful avenues to explore.

Impacts of personal factors on morale and career choices

In terms of education, the majority of staff who were interviewed had an advanced degree or were in a graduate degree program. Staff saw education as necessary—but if it does not guarantee career progression; what DOES guarantee career progression for library staff? Many interviewees reported that staff who attain the MLIS while working at a library cannot count on getting a position as a librarian there; why is this the case? In addition, how are staff members who hold the MLIS degree different in terms of job satisfaction and morale than those who do not, in particular, if they are aiming at librarianship? Duration of job tenure in a staff position may also play a role here.

Caregiving was another aspect of conflicts between personal and professional lives. A majority of the staff who were interviewed had a spouse and/or children, and family needs often impacted their career choices. Further research can explore the extent of supports in staff's lives, as well as the extent of their self-care.

Also, many staff brought up ways that class impacted their career—either smoothing it through privilege or challenging it through financial hardship, for example in trying to pay off student loans. In addition, the experiences of BIPOC library staff, mentioned above, are perhaps the most urgent and important question for researchers to consider along these lines.

The role of hierarchy in morale

The research team expected to uncover a direct relationship between a library staff member's position in the hierarchy and morale. Instead, it found that morale depended more on organizational factors such as the ability to progress, workload, respect, and funding for new hires. However, it is possible that a different study design or a focus on a different aspect of library staff career trajectories might uncover some connections that this study did not illuminate.

Additional questions

The research team has been fortunate, at the time of writing, to have already presented its findings to several library groups and conferences (the University of California, Berkeley Library Research Working Group; the ACRL 2021 Conference; the Pennsylvania Library Association; and the University of California Libraries Forum). Below are the excellent questions raised by presentation attendees.

- The most challenging and important research needed is on the experiences of BIPOC library staff, their experiences of racism and White supremacist workplaces, how those can and should be addressed, and how the staff themselves can be supported.
- Many library staff members are not embedded in formal vertical hierarchies. An environmental scan is needed to understand the environments in which library staff actually find themselves, and the degree to which they actually represent hierarchies at all, especially as many academic libraries are in combined arrangements with other campus service offices. In fact, many library staff reported that they are rarely in contact with librarians; are their morale experiences different in any way? Does it make a difference if the reporting structure is through a Dean rather than a director? Does it matter whether the library's leader is a librarian or not? Does it matter if the library is a joint department with IT, or with instructional services, or some other unit? Does it matter if people are in main as opposed to branch libraries?
- More information is needed, as noted above, about the impact of librarians having faculty status as opposed to not. Faculty librarians have a range of responsibilities related to that status which can take them away from the library setting, making them seem distant and unavailable. They also have very different career

trajectories and motivations if they are faculty. In either case, there is a sense among many librarians that they are looked down upon by subject-matter faculty based in academic departments. This leads to the question of whether the stresses and uncertainties of librarians' own experiences of striving to belong and feeling less-than in the academic setting are in turn transmitted down the hierarchy to library staff, much as cycles of abuse happen generationally in families ("I had to deal with this, so now you have to"). Besides the more obvious effects on morale, this can lead to added emotional labor for staff who feel they need to "manage up" (take care of the emotional well-being of librarians and managers above them in the hierarchy).

- Researchers are examining the question of class relationships and how they play out in library settings. The literature in US-based journals tends not to mention class explicitly (just as Americans often don't self-identify in terms of class), but the research team believes this is an important omission and that class is a major part of library staff life. Finances and pay equity were often mentioned by the interviewees, and class plays a huge role in choices of library staff related to what they want and can/will accept in their careers. Some staff can accept a lower wage because they have external support, while others struggle because they are the primary earner in their family and staff wages are not sufficient to maintain a family. These issues also play out in whether staff can have or want full-time vs. part-time work, and whether they can accept temporary work for chances at career advancement.
- A sense of global security and preparedness for disaster has been shaken up for everyone in the past year. The interviews in this study gathered beginning glimpses of the wide variation in responses to the early COVID pandemic since they occurred in May-June 2020. More than a year later, at the time of writing, more is known about the range of solutions to the crisis of sudden closure and how to maintain a workforce and attempt to keep morale steady for a long and uncertain period. Research should be done and will be needed in the future, about which strategies were most effective for which settings, and how to improve preparedness for future crises. Additionally, the research team suspects that many of the study interviewees were substantially harmed during the COVID times, in terms of being placed in situations where they deeply feared for the safety of themselves and their families, and where the extent to which they were not viewed as equals was revealed to them. Apologies and reparation are called for in these circumstances, but if they are not forthcoming, even acknowledgment would go a long way. While there were examples of the crisis being handled well, more often the interviews revealed a snapshot of organizations in shock, making bad decisions for their staff, based on wishful thinking.
- The study findings demonstrate that over time there have been changes and substantial blurring between librarian and library staff roles, and also that many library staff have credentials and academic aspirations which exceed the requirements of their actual positions. This was true for this study's interviewees, many of whom reported academic work and/or aspirations in fields outside librarianship. It would be fascinating to tease out this aspect of career advancement. In

addition, the research team and many others remain interested in the question of the career trajectories and experiences of library staff who hold or obtain an MLIS degree. With tight job markets, blurred roles, and possible bias against hiring library staff into librarian positions in their own institutions, the path to advancement to librarianship is often not smooth.

- A related question is the role played by unions in staff morale and supports. Unions can both reduce and enhance feelings of precarity, given a person's seniority in their library. What other ways can union presence and membership shift library staff morale?
- The library literature strongly states that pay equity is a central feature of library morale, and just as strongly states that most libraries will say there is nothing they can do to change it. Is that true? Have, as Oberg states, librarians abdicated their responsibility to advocate for pay equity for their staff colleagues? How can librarians act to impact change in library staff pay structures? Additionally, what kinds of corollary compensation might be attractive and acceptable? This does not mean "forced fun Fridays," but options such as flexible schedules, support for workplace projects of personal interest to a staff member, enhanced leave and vacation time, financial support for graduate study and other professional development, supports for caregiving, etc. What could work, and what has worked?
- Finally, what are effective ways to make sure that all levels of the library hierarchy, or points in the workplace network, understand what staff do? Are there effective programs to accomplish this? And, have they led to improved behaviors in terms of viewing staff colleagues as equals, for example in the assignment of equally pleasant workspaces?

Conclusions

In possibly the first in-depth qualitative study of library staff morale, as opposed to librarian morale, this study's interviews with library staff members nationwide yield a rich trove of information about how libraries' cultures and management systems can adjust and strive to improve staff morale. Notably, a central aspect of high morale rests on staff members' direct bosses, and the support, encouragement, and concrete interventions immediate managers can provide in terms of autonomy, flexibility, and professional development. Just as importantly, being viewed with respect, as equals in value, contributions, and skill as compared with to anyone at any level of the library's hierarchy is a non-negotiable precondition for high morale. This valuing and respect can at least in part be shown by centering the perspectives of staff, listening to them, and acting on the ideas they share.

While these seem like obvious workplace attributes, this study's respondents report that they actually are anything but. When asked in the screening questionnaire why they were interested in participating in the study, several respondents gave variations of the sentiment "I can't believe someone is actually asking what staff think!" Actions such as training direct managers and changing mission statements are not enough—and certainly, a few staff parties and social events are not either. Libraries need to adequately

compensate staff, allow them the same opportunities for growth as other library workers are granted, and give them seats and power in the room where things happen, in order to raise morale. Staff must be, in all ways, viewed as equals. Where there is the will at the upper levels of the organizational structure, it is possible. In the example given by one of the study's library staff participants:

> My boss is very uplifting. He doesn't seem to have a big ego, he just wants to get things working, to have everyone happy … he's always asking what he can do to help us, and not meddling unless we ask for help. So, we're really free to grow.

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Appendix A. Email: Call for participation

Subject: Invitation for research study on library STAFF morale
Please excuse cross-posting, as we are distributing widely

We know this is a challenging time for all of us! At the same time, we hope you'll consider being part of this study, exploring morale of library STAFF (as opposed to librarians). We want to explore the effects of organizational structures/hierarchies on staff morale.

To participate, you should be aged 18 or older, and working in a staff (not librarian) position at a US academic library (except UC Berkeley). We'll ask you to do a short screening survey, and then be interviewed online. All the information will be confidential, and the study has been approved by the UC Berkeley's IRB.

We're hoping that the results may help library administrations understand and better address issues that may raise morale concerns in their settings.

Also, participants will receive a $25 gift card to the independent book seller Powell's Books.

Questions? Please email Ann Glusker, at glusker@berkeley.edu. Thanks for considering!

Appendix B. Consent form

Ethics approval: CPHS # 2020-03-13094

Consent to participate in a study of library staff morale

Hello! My name is Ann Glusker. My colleagues on this study (Bonita Dyess, Celia Emmelhainz, Natalia Estrada) and I are/have been librarians and library staff, and are now at the University of California, Berkeley.

We want to interview library staff working in academic libraries in the US, so that we can explore the relationship between libraries' organizational hierarchies and staff morale. We're hoping the results will help academic libraries broadly to better address and improve staff morale.

This form explains your rights, so that you can understand the project and choose whether to participate.

Most importantly, your participation is voluntary. You can refuse any questions or stop the interview at any time.

If you agree to participate, we will talk online over Google Hangouts about your work in your library, including the organizational structure of your setting, and some of your job experiences and perceptions of them. We'll talk for 30–60 min.

We will only audio record our conversation, with your permission, in order to transcribe it. After it has been transcribed and we have a text of the interview (within approximately three days) we will delete all audio recordings. We will also delete connections between your name and contact information and the transcript.

To keep your information confidential, we will keep this form separate, and will remove your name and personally identifying information from any notes or transcripts. We will not directly identify you in publications or presentations. And we'll store notes, recordings, and interview transcripts in password-protected files in secured computer storage.

If you have questions, please email me at glusker@berkeley.edu.

If you are concerned about your rights, you can also contact my university's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at 510-642-7461 or subjects@berkeley.edu.

If you agree to take part in this research, please save or print a copy of this page, then click 'I consent' below.

Appendix C. Screening questions

Please answer the questions below so we can be sure it will work to include you in the study.

1. Do you work at an academic library in the United States? Y/N
2. Is your position considered a librarian position, a library staff position, or other? (please explain)
3. Are you able to spend one hour participating in an interview about your job and workplace? Y/N
4. Do you have a device or phone available on which you could participate in such an interview? Y/Other (please explain)
5. Are you age 18 or older? Y/N
6. Briefly, what interests you/why do you hope to participate in this study?

Finally, please email me at glusker@berkeley.edu to set up a time to talk online! Or, if you prefer, you can enter your contact information below and I will contact you.

Appendix D. Interview protocol template

Library Staff Morale Interview #__
Pseudonym for respondent:
Interviewer(s):
Notetaker(s):
Date:
Online venue: Google Meet or phone
Observations: [your notes on context, mood, impressions, and key insights]:

Introductions: Welcome! Thanks so much for taking the time to talk with us. Our names are *[whoever's on the call]* and we're librarians and staff at the University of California, Berkeley.

We're interviewing academic library staff to understand how your place in the library relates to your workplace morale. Just as a reminder, all aspects of this study are optional: you don't have to answer any given question and can end the interview at any time.

Are you okay with being audio recorded? We'll record this on a phone and/or Google Meet (audio only), then delete the recording as soon as we've transcribed the conversation. _____Y/N

We'll put a list of the questions in chat [copy below into chat]:

1. What is your current role, and how long have you been in your current position?
2. How long have you worked in libraries? What other roles have you held?
3. What is your educational background?
4. Could you tell me more about the personnel structure for staff in your library, and your place in that structure.
5. Do you have a sense of career progression at your current library?
6. In your workplace, how much flexibility is there to change roles?
7. If you are comfortable, would you share your age range, ethnicity, and gender – or any other demographic factors you think might affect staff experiences and morale?
8. How would you describe your level of job satisfaction?
9. How would you describe your level of morale at work?
10. Where do you think you might want to go from here?
11. Would you like information about workplace and/or emotional supports?
12. Do you have any questions for us?

Appendix E. Resource sheet

Resources for workplace support – *Library Staff Morale Study, 2020*
Resources on morale, mobbing, toxic leadership and dysfunction in libraries:

- The Low Morale Experience of Academic Librarians: A Phenomenological Study: our inspiration, a study by Kaetrena Davis Kendrick
- Vocational Awe And Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves (explicitly includes staff)
- Mobbing in the library workplace: What it is and how to prevent it
- Toxic Leaders, Toxic Workers: Learning to Cope | Leading From the Library
- Is Your Workplace Toxic?
- Incivility and Dysfunction in the Library Workplace
- Academic Libraries and Toxic Leadership (dissertation; also podcast with the author)
- Delay, distract, defer: addressing sabotage in the academic library

Microaggressions

- Definitions, by Derald Wing Sue (widely cited for his work on this topic)

- Tool: Interrupting Microaggressions
- 9 Phrases Allies Can Say When Getting Called Out Instead of Getting Defensive

Resources for recovering from low morale and burnout:

- See Kaetrina Davis Kendrick's website Renewals, and her closed Facebook group, Renewers: Recovering from Low Morale in American Libraries
- Responding to and Reimagining Resilience in Academic Libraries
- The Age of Overwhelm (book)
- From the Trauma Stewardship Institute: The TSI Survival Guide (note: a little perky)
- The Compassionate Librarian: "You Can't Give From an Empty Well"

Resources for library staff during the pandemic:

- Putting the Self back in Self-Care: Wellness in the time of COVID-19 (webinar with speakers including Kaetrena Davis Kendrick)
- Pandemic Resources for Academic Libraries: Self-Care and New Ways of Working

Resources for handling your career and your managers:

- From the other direction–articles on engagement and satisfaction with library jobs
- Plateauing and career satisfaction in libraries
- Courageous followership in organizations
- What game are you playing? A framework for redefining success
- Love it, don't leave it: 26 ways to get what you want at work
- Managing Up at work

Other resources:

- Words Matter (results from survey exploring acceptability of various titles for library staff)
- Workplace Speech in Libraries
- *Psychology Today*'s Index of Blogs (take a look at the Work section)

Questions? Contact Ann Glusker at glusker@berkeley.edu