

#LibraryStaffLife: Improving Staff Morale in Academic Libraries

Intro: Others have studied librarian morale, but no one was looking at *staff!*

Method: We interviewed 34 academic library staff from 23 institutions by phone or online in May-June 2020, transcribed, and coded in MaxQDA.

Findings:

- The strangleholds of hierarchies
- The librarian/staff divide
- Need for prof. dev. support
- Manager advocacy is central!



Library
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UCB Library

WHAT STAFF WANT EVERYONE TO KNOW!

On the divide: “Librarians can protect themselves [from COVID], but we clerks could be out there interfacing with the students and touching everything, and they were willing to have that happen to us.”

On good management: “He’s the boss I’ve been waiting for my whole life...he’s very uplifting and he knows he’s putting a lot of money into people to get their training...we’re doing really well since he got here.”
“I don’t know that I’m as much of a fighter as some of my awesome supervisors have been.”

On career growth: “Until I retire or die, there’s not gonna be another staff supervisor position... I’ve either got to quit or die... the only way they could move is to move sideways. They can’t move up.”

Ways to Systemically Break Down the Divide:

- Include staff in committees and leadership
- Foster peer collaboration between librarians and staff
- Fight for fair pay and classification for all staff
- Pitch in: fill your own darn copier tray!
- Provide professional development funds
- Share prospective changes and then use staff feedback
- Ensure that those who can’t afford an MLIS can still advance

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Check out our
webinar:
[https://is.gd/PaLA_](https://is.gd/PaLA_UCBMoraleTalk)
UCBMoraleTalk

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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 Kaetrena 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 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)