

Characterizing the Role of the Public Librarian: A Survey

By Robert Flatley

Introduction

Public libraries are going through a period of great change as the use of the Internet and other computerized resources grow more widespread. These developments are altering how libraries deliver information and interact with the community. As the information revolution sweeps across the world, libraries are in a unique position to be in the forefront of this revolution. Leadership within the library community is critical at this time to ensure the growth and viability of libraries in the 21st century. If librarians do not take the lead in the information revolution libraries are in danger of being replaced by other information providers, commercial organizations that provide information for a fee. This is a unique opportunity but it will require a great deal of work. Librarians, as a profession, must be willing to redefine who they are and what they do. Librarians must be willing to promote the library not as a place but as a service (Vavrek 1993, 10). Librarians must be willing to expand beyond the traditional roles of the public library to include partnerships with businesses and other organizations.

Rural libraries are not immune from these changes. In fact, the leadership of librarians at the rural level is even more important than at the urban level where libraries employ numerous professionally-trained librarians. In most rural libraries, there is only one librarian who is responsible for managing all aspects of the library. In addition, very few rural librarians have a M.L.S. degree (Holt 1995, 200). Therefore the responsibility for carrying the small, rural library into the "brave new world" of the "information age" rests almost entirely on one individual who frequently has no more than a high school education.

The current study evolved out of reading the work of Dr. Bernard Vavrek, a dedicated scholar who has written extensively on the subject of rural libraries and rural librarianship. In the conclusion of his study "Assessing the Role of the Rural Public Library" he asks the following disturbing question: "Is it possible, that in addition to all the challenges facing the future of library services, that effective solutions are being denied because of a lack of confidence about the importance of libraries within the ranks of librarians themselves?" (Vavrek 1993, 38). This led the researcher to ponder "How do rural librarians view librarianship, libraries and the future of the public library?" Could the question posed by Vavrek indeed be true?

In an effort to explore this issue, a search of the literature was done. It was discovered that there were very few studies on how librarians perceive themselves and libraries. There has been almost nothing done on how rural librarians view librarianship and libraries.

Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were as follows: (1) To determine how rural librarians feel about the importance of their profession; (2) To determine how committed rural librarians are to their field; (3) To determine what aspects of their jobs they feel are most important; (4) To determine if rural librarians feel they make a difference in their community and (5) To determine what rural librarians feel is the future of librarianship and libraries.

Methodology

For this study, the U. S. Census Bureau definition of rural was used. The Census Bureau uses the figure of 2,500 to designate an area as rural. This definition of rural was chosen because very little research has been done specifically on libraries and librarians that serve communities of 2,500 or less.

Surveys were mailed to 441 rural library directors throughout the United States. The libraries were selected from the United States Department of Education's booklet "Public Libraries in the United States." This useful resource lists libraries by population served. All libraries were compiled in Access, a database, with the invaluable assistance of Vicki Douth of Clarion University's Computer Services. The libraries were arranged by zip code. Every fifth library was chosen from the list. The names of the library directors were looked up in the "American Library Directory." Surveys were coded for potential follow-up purposes by putting a number in the upper right-hand corner of the first page. A personalized cover letter was created and each one signed by the researcher. The surveys were mailed out on March 20, 2000. Each also contained a self-addressed stamped envelope to facilitate returns. April 10, 2000 was the designated return date.

Results and Analysis

A total of 441 surveys were mailed out. Two-hundred and thirty two completed surveys were returned within the designated time frame (a 53 percent return rate). One questionnaire was returned with the sad note that due to "lack of finance, the library was closed." Several were returned because of address changes. One reported serving a population of more than 2,500 and

it was not used. Due to time constraints, a follow-up mailing to increase return rate was not possible.

The first set of questions asked respondents about librarianship. The first question asked how long they had been a librarian. The most popular answer was “more than 10 years” (40 percent), followed by “6-10 years” (27 percent) and “1-5 years” (26 percent). Only 6 percent of the respondents indicated they had worked at the library for less than one year.

In Q2, the librarians were asked why they chose to be a librarian. Table 1 below summarizes the results.

Reasons	Percentage
Relative/Friend was/is a librarian	7%
Enjoy working with people	22%
Enjoy working with books	46%
Enjoy working with technology	2%
Wanted to get more involved with community	8%
Other	15%

As can be seen from the results, the most popular answer was “I enjoy working with books.” A love of books is the reason many of us pursue library work. But in this increasingly technological age, that is no longer enough. Librarians must also actively work to incorporate and appreciate technology equally in the profession.

In Q3, the respondents were asked about what they feel is their most important role as a librarian. Table 2 summarizes the responses.

Role	Percentage
Information provider	34%
Helping people	44%
Collecting and organizing library materials	5%
Promoting libraries and library services	13%
Other	4%

Some of the comments included:

“to promote reading, especially for children.”

“matching people with books they’ll enjoy...”

“to facilitate a volunteer library.”

It is encouraging to note that the most popular response was “helping people.” Perhaps data such as this can help dispel the stereotype of the rural librarian as being a “studious bookworm,” more comfortable with books than people (Marcus 1990, 69).

In Q4, the librarians were asked to characterize their library work. A series of descriptive terms such as challenging, flexible, stressful, intellectually stimulating, etc., were chosen. The respondents were asked whether the terms characterized their work. Table 3 below summarizes the results.

Table 3

Degree to which the following descriptions characterize library work:

Description	Yes	No	Somewhat
Challenging	75%	1%	23%
Creative	62%	4%	34%
Dynamic/Exciting	38%	11%	51%
Flexible	67%	4%	29%
Repetitive/Routine	24%	27%	49%
Rewarding	92%	0%	8%
Service-Oriented	92%	1%	7%
Stressful	22%	29%	48%
Technological	58%	8%	34%
Intellectually Stimulating	73%	3%	22%
Recognition/Status	17%	30%	53%

The responses to this question were very positive. Rural librarians overwhelmingly found their work to be rewarding, service-oriented and intellectually stimulating. The only drawbacks were the lack of recognition and status and that nearly half of the librarians found their work to be stressful. But, judging by these responses, it would appear that rural librarianship has a lot to offer.

This would naturally lead one to believe that these librarians would rate their job satisfaction as high. In Q6, the respondents were asked to rate their overall job satisfaction. It should come as no surprise that 64 percent indicated they were “very satisfied.” Twenty-six percent indicated they were “somewhat satisfied.” This accounts for 91 percent of those surveyed. Only 10 indicated they were “somewhat dissatisfied” and no one said they were “very dissatisfied.”

In Q7, they were asked whether or not they planned to remain a librarian for the rest of their careers. Fifty-six percent of the respondents answered “yes” to this question, 12 percent said “no” and 32 percent were unsure. This

question was asked to determine the level of commitment rural librarians have to the profession. The 56 percent rate does indicate a solid level of commitment to the field however several factors must be taken into consideration here. Unfortunately due to funding, most small libraries can only afford one part-time librarian. Often the person is retired or someone whose income is supplemented by another full-time worker in the household. The researcher feels the results would be different if the jobs were mostly full-time and the income was needed to support a family.

In Q8, the librarians were asked what aspect of their job they liked the most. Table 4 summarizes the data:

What librarians like most about their job:	
Working with books	15%
The opportunity to make a difference in someone's life	33%
Interacting with the community	45%
Other	8%

Some of the comments included:

"The stimulating environment of information."

"I have the opportunity to promote reading..."

"Getting books and people together."

"Making a difference in the community."

Interestingly enough, the most popular answer was "Interacting with the community" followed by "the opportunity to make a difference in someone's life." This contrasts with the information gathered in Q2 where the librarians were asked why they chose to be a librarian. The most popular answer was "I enjoy working with books." It appears that as librarians work in the field their focus shifts from books to people.

In Q9, the respondents were asked the opposite question that is what was their primary complaint with being a librarian. Table 5 summarizes the data.

Table 5
Librarians' primary complaint.

Complaint	Percentage
Repetitive	3%
No respect from the community	3%
Not enough money to buy new materials or technology	38%
Low pay	21%
No complaints	20%
Other	16%

Some of the comments included:

"not enough time, understaffed."

"I'm having difficulty keeping up with technology."

"want to provide more than Board does."

"would like more patrons, too many books on the shelves at the end of the day."

"not enough community support."

"too much emphasis on technology, not enough on reading."

Surprisingly, "low pay" was not the most common complaint. Instead "not enough money to buy new materials or technology" was the number one complaint. This shows a great deal of dedication and commitment on the part of the rural librarians surveyed. The results suggest that most rural librarians put the library's needs ahead of their own. In fact, the choice "no complaints" had almost the identical response as "low pay." Again, the fact that most of these librarians work part-time and many are retired must be considered here. If the library job was the family's primary income, the complaint of "low pay" most likely would have had a higher response rate.

In Q5, the question of low pay and librarians is addressed. Librarians have historically been underpaid compared to other professions (MacDonald 1995, 42). Boyer (1987) believes that this is due to the fact that the public "holds an unfavorable and unrealistic view of librarians and libraries" (p. 2). What should disturb us is the fact that what people think "not only limits our status and salaries but also the growth of our profession and the funding and use of libraries" (Schuman 1990, 87). Table 6 summarizes the results.

Table 6
Why have librarians historically been underpaid?

Reason	Percentage
The public does not value librarians	33%
The community lacks funds	46%
Library services are not essential	11%
Other reasons	10%

Some of the other comments included:

“Most library board members are from an era when volunteers did the job.”

“I believe that all of the above apply plus most librarians are women and our work is usually undervalued.”

“General public and others don't understand all that's involved in being a librarian.”

“Library services are non-essential when up against fire trucks and police cars.”

“Never gave it a thought as happiness in my work, around books, with wonderful people is reward enough.”

“ALA and states do not do enough to support libraries especially public libraries.”

“The public has always seen it as a luxury, which is false.”

“Librarians are not organized and do not have strong representation.”

“The public does not understand the importance of libraries.”

“Librarians have not been self-advocates.”

“Libraries are free.”

As can be seen from the table, the two most common responses were “the community lacks funds” and “the public does not value librarians.” Perhaps these results can be interpreted as follows: because the public does not value librarians, *the community lacks funds for libraries*. There certainly appears to be no lack of community funds for other services such as police, fire, prisons, roads, local government, etc. Why aren't libraries considered essential in rural communities? It is the local library that should act as the community's cultural and information center as well as the guardian of the community's past and heritage, preserving what makes the community special in a world that is becoming increasingly monotone. Are these activities unessential and unimportant?

In the second set of questions (Q10-Q13) respondents were asked about the role of the public librarian in the community. In Q10, the librarians were asked if they felt that part of their role as a public librarian was to be involved in the community. Table 8 summarizes the responses.

Table 8

Do you feel that part of your role as a public librarian is to be:		
Role	Yes	No
A community leader?	72%	28%
A role model to young people?	93%	7%
Involved in community affairs and planning?	79%	21%
A member of various community organizations?	62%	38%

This researcher feels that one of the rural librarian's most important roles is to be actively involved in their local community and, as can be seen from the above data, most of the librarians were in strong agreement

In the next question (Q11), the librarians were queried as to whether or not they felt that public librarians should take an active role in their community's economic development. Thirty-four percent of the surveyed librarians answered in the affirmative. Only 13 percent answered "no" but over half (53 percent) were not sure. The public library can only be as economically healthy as the community in which it exists. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for rural librarians to take an active role in promoting the community's economic development. For example, a rural librarian could get involved in the local Chamber of Commerce.

The last two questions of this section dealt with whether or not the librarians felt their libraries contributed to the community and if they felt the community valued and respected what they do. In (Q13), the researcher asked a series of questions about how the library contributes to the community. Table 9 summarizes the data.

Table 9

Does the public library...	Yes	No
Contribute to making life better in your community?	98%	2%
Contributes to the economy in your community?	47%	53%
Has made a difference in people's lives?	99%	1%
Plays a vital role in your community?	83%	17%

What stands out in the researcher's mind is the strong agreement to three of the four statements. Not surprisingly, the odd one out is the statement about the library contributing to the local economy. Certainly libraries are non-profit entities dedicated to serving the local citizens free of charge but librarians need to consider the economic value of the services they provide. They need to make citizens aware of the expense involved in providing free materials, free programs for adults and children, free access to the Internet and other computerized information resources and especially the free personalized service provided by the library staff. Libraries contribute a great deal to their communities. Librarians need to more aggressively promote what they do and make people aware of what a "bargain" the American public library really is. It's increasingly becoming one of the last places where people can get information and service for free.

In Q12, the librarians were asked if they believe their communities valued what they did. The respondents were evenly split between "yes" (47

percent) and “somewhat” (47 percent). Only 6 percent answered “no.” Its discouraging to note that less than half answered “yes” to this question. This is another case of the need for librarians to promote the library. Librarians can garner more respect from the public by being stronger advocates of libraries and library services.

In the next section of the survey, a series of statements were made about librarians and libraries (Q14-Q21). The respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement or were not sure. The researcher attempted to choose statements that were controversial. Table 10 lists the statements and summarizes the responses.

Table 10

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
Q14. Librarians enjoy working more with books than technology	46%	25%	29%
Q15. Librarians need to embrace technology and make it the focus of their profession.	26%	45%	29%
Q16. The media stereotypes librarians negatively.	32%	32%	33%
Q17. Assertiveness and excellent communication skills are essential to being an effective librarian.	87%	6%	7%
Q18. Information manager is a more apt title for the 21st century librarian.	62%	15%	22%
Q19. Librarians are community leaders.	62%	15%	23%
Q20. The library exists primarily to provide books and other materials to its patrons.	55%	34%	11%
Q21. Librarians need to be more aggressive in marketing the services they provide.	79%	4%	17%

Of special interest are Q15, Q18 and Q21. Q15 stated that “Librarians need to embrace technology and make it the focus of their profession.” Although almost half of the respondents disagreed with this statement (45 percent) its surprising to note that over half either agreed with it or were unsure. This data would indicate that librarians, even at the smallest libraries, are making an effort to embrace technology and make it part of their professional responsibility. Likewise, in Q18 (“Information manager is a more apt title for the 21st century librarian”) 62 percent agreed with this statement. To this researcher, the responses to the two above statements are very encouraging. It indicates rural librarians are doing the difficult work of

redefining their roles as librarians. This is the important work that must continue at all levels of librarianship if we are to remain viable as a profession in the 21st century.

Also encouraging is the librarians response to Q21: "Librarians need to be more aggressive in marketing the services they provide." Seventy-nine percent agreed with this statement. As rural libraries continue to face increasing competition from other information providers such as the Internet, marketing the library's services becomes more important. Vavrek (1993) states that "there is no greater challenge for all of public librarianship than to broaden the base of its constituencies" through marketing and client feedback (p. 2).

In the rapidly changing environment of the information age, librarians need to be sensitive and responsive to the changing economic and demographic features of their "market" in the same manner as the business world does. For example, Vavrek (1990) has shown that more than 70 percent of rural library users are women (p. 21) however this traditional base of support is rapidly deteriorating as more and more rural women are joining the work force (Holt 1995, 194). Librarians must be flexible and adjust to this change by reorienting and marketing the materials and services of the library to rural growth populations such as telecommuters and senior citizens (Holt 1995, 195-196).

The future of librarianship and libraries and the challenge of the Internet was the focus of the next set of questions (Q22-Q27). In Q22, the librarians were asked whether or not they worried that their job may become obsolete because of advances in technology. The majority (77 percent) responded in the negative to this question. Eighteen percent indicated that they were somewhat worried and only 5 percent said they were worried. These results suggest that the majority of rural librarians do not feel that technology will replace the need for librarians.

Along similar lines, Q23 asked whether or not they would encourage a young person to pursue librarianship as a career. Given the current state of turmoil in the profession as it adjusts to new responsibilities and new technologies, the researcher was curious how rural librarians would answer this question. Surprisingly, despite low pay and an uncertain future, the majority of the librarians (68 percent) indicated that they would encourage a young person to pursue librarianship. Thirteen percent said they would not and 19 percent were unsure.

The next question dealt with the future of the public library. In Q24, the librarians were asked if they felt that public libraries would be more important or less important in the future. Table 11 summarizes the results.

Public libraries in the future will be...	
More Important	39%
Less Important	13%
About the same	43%
Not sure	6%

It's encouraging to note that most of the librarians indicated that they felt that libraries will be at least as important or more important to society than they are today (82 percent).

In Q25, the librarians were asked what they thought was the greatest challenge facing libraries. Table 12 summarizes the results.

Greatest Challenge Facing Libraries	
Funding	63%
Community Involvement	17%
Competition from the Internet	15%
Other	5%

Some comments included:

"Keeping up with technology."

"Promoting reading at a time when fewer and fewer people are reading."

"Apathy regarding libraries."

The researcher was particularly interested in the response to "Competition from the Internet." The results indicate that most rural librarians do not feel that the Internet is the greatest challenge facing rural libraries. Instead, of course, funding was the first choice.

The last two questions in this section focused specifically on the Internet. Q26 asked if the librarians thought that the continued growth of the Internet would make physical libraries less important in the future. This question was asked because of the continued growth of on-line access to library catalogs and databases through the Internet. However, most of the respondents answered "no" (60 percent). Sixteen percent answered "yes" and 24 percent said they were not sure. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Internet access is less widespread in rural areas than in suburban areas. Also, Vavrek (1990) showed that the most common use of the rural library was

checking out bestsellers (p. 2). An increase in Internet usage would not affect this popular use of the rural library.

Q27 asked a similar question. The librarians were asked if they thought fewer people were using the library because they could get their information at home using the Internet. Again, as in Q26, the most popular answer was “no” (45 percent). However, thirty-two percent responded “yes” and 23 percent were not sure. In effect, the majority of those surveyed (68 percent) felt that fewer people were using the library because of the Internet or were not sure. If one bases library importance on library usage, this data contradicts the response to Q26 where most of the librarians felt that the continued growth of the Internet would not effect the importance of physical libraries.

In the final set of questions, the respondents were asked to provide information about their age, gender and educational level. Not surprisingly, almost all the respondents were female (99 percent). Most were between the ages of 40-59 (57 percent), 31 percent indicated they were over 60 and only 11 percent were between the ages of 20-39.

In Q28, the librarians were asked to specify their highest level of education attained. Table 13 summarizes the results.

Less than High School	0% (2 responses)
High School diploma	29%
Some college	26%
Associate degree	4%
Bachelor's degree	23%
MLS Degree	4%
Master's Degree	12%
Doctoral Degree	0% (1 response)

As can be seen from the results, the most common level of education attainment was a high school diploma (29 percent). Very few rural librarians have a MLS degree (4 percent). This is a problem of great concern as the future of the rural public library depends on the education of the rural librarian (Barron 1995, 78). How can librarians with no more than a high school education be expected to accomplish all that will be required of them to enable their libraries to go beyond being a place for women to check-out best-sellers and attend an occasional children's story hour to being the vibrant educational, cultural, and information center that the 21st century public will demand? The answer, of course, is education and training.

This issue is of great concern to Vavrek, director of the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship. He has devoted his career to the study of rural librarianship and is committed to finding solutions to the problems confronting rural librarians. Vavrek has proposed that a Virtual Rural Library Association be created on the web to “extend support and knowledge to rural libraries and librarians” (Vavrek 2000). Barron (1995) suggests the creation of a virtual campus of library and information science to be offered through distance education. This campus would be funded by local libraries, state library associations, professional associations, and library science schools (p.79).

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this survey was to learn how rural librarians view librarianship and libraries and the future of both. Librarians serving communities of 2,500 or less were chosen because their voices are seldom heard in the library literature. A total of 441 surveys were mailed out. Two-hundred thirty two were analyzed. The majority of the respondents were women between the ages of 40-59.

The researcher found that rural librarians are overwhelmingly positive about the profession and its future. Rural librarians found their work to be rewarding, service-oriented and intellectually stimulating. They rated their overall job satisfaction as high and most planned to work in libraries for the rest of their careers.

They indicated that what they liked most about their work was interacting with the community and the opportunity to make a difference in people’s lives. Their primary complaint was a selfless one, lamenting the fact that they did not have enough money to purchase new materials and technology to better serve their communities.

Rural librarians strongly felt that they should be involved in their communities as role models, as community leaders, as members of community organizations. The only role they did not embrace was the role of being involved in their community’s economic development. Furthermore, the librarians indicated they felt that the library contributed to making life better in their community and was a vital part of the community. Unfortunately, less than half felt that the community valued and respected what they did.

On the future of libraries and librarianship, the librarians again were very positive about both. It appears that rural librarians are making the necessary adjustments to move the profession into the 21st century by incorporating technology into their professional responsibilities and embracing the title “Information Manager” as more appropriate for the 21st century librarian.

In regards to the Internet, it was found that the majority of the librarians did not feel that technology would replace the need for librarians. In fact, most would encourage a young person to pursue librarianship as a career. In addition, most did not think that the Internet would make libraries less important in the future. Although many thought that the Internet may be responsible for less people using the library. Lastly, the librarians did not see competition from the Internet as the greatest challenge facing libraries. But instead they felt funding was the number one challenge.

Despite the positive nature of these results, rural librarians and libraries are facing a challenging future. Rural librarians must come to terms with the great changes occurring in our society as it shifts the Industrial Age to the Information Age. One critical issue that must be addressed is the issue of education. Rural librarians will need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to cope with the demands of a rapidly changing society. One way to do this is through continuing education, workshops, networking, etc. This would be best facilitated through a Virtual Rural Library Association such as Vavrek has proposed and the creation of a Virtual Library School on the Internet.

Another area of concern is the area of marketing the library. This researcher recommends that librarians take some lessons from the business world. In an increasingly competitive and commercial world, libraries must learn to market their services and specialness in order to compete with other information providers. In addition, librarians need to actively seek partnerships with businesses and other organizations. Librarians need to actively work to draw people into the library. If they come for some other service or event, they will likely use the library's services as well. In addition, the library could charge businesses or other organizations a fee to use part of the library. Some examples that have been successful at larger libraries include concerts, art exhibits, selling coffee, selling new books, offering classes on personal finance, cooking, or web surfing (Marcus 1999, 48). There is no reason similar ideas could not work at rural libraries. One suggestion for rural libraries is for them to offer child care services for working mothers (Shilts 1993, 67). What better place to leave your child than the trusty public library?

In the Netherlands, they have taken the concept of cooperation and partnerships a step further. There are experiments underway in several rural communities to incorporate many services and business under one roof. Some examples of library cooperative efforts include housing a bank office, a bookstore, the post office, local government offices, a tourist office and even an insurance office within the library building. The idea is to bring several services that would have a difficult time surviving individually in rural areas under one roof, employing "the shop within the shop" concept

(Scheepstra 1996). There is no reason why similar arrangements could not be successful in rural communities in America.

The researcher would like to conclude this paper with several recommendations for further research. One area that the current study did not cover adequately was the issue of rural librarian compensation. How are rural librarians compensated compared to other public employees in rural communities? This research could shed further light onto the question of why librarians have historically been underpaid. Another area for further research is the rural librarian and the Internet. How comfortable do rural librarians feel using and teaching the Internet? What sort of Internet resources do rural libraries currently have? How do rural librarians use the Internet? Lastly, what sorts of partnerships and cooperative efforts are rural librarians already engaged in? Do rural librarians think this is important work? Also, what types of community organizations are rural librarians active in?

Finally, in response to Vavrek's question raised earlier about whether or not effective solutions to the challenges facing libraries "are being denied because of a lack of confidence about the importance of libraries within the ranks of librarians themselves?" Based on the results of this survey, this researcher would have to conclude that this is not the case. Rural librarians appear to view libraries as important to their communities and, in general, are optimistic about the future of libraries and librarianship. What this researcher sees as the major stumbling block facing rural libraries is not a lack of confidence but a lack of education to cope with the great changes the "information revolution" is forcing upon libraries.

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The first set of questions are about being a librarian.

Q1. Please indicate the number of years you have been a librarian?
Circle answer.

- | | |
|-------------------|----------|
| a. Less than one. | 15 (6%) |
| b. 1-5 | 61 (26%) |
| c. 6-10 | 64 (27%) |
| d. More than 10. | 84 (40%) |

Q2. What was the main reason that you choose to be a librarian?
Circle one answer.

- | | |
|--|----------|
| a. Relative or friend was/is a librarian. | 15 (7%) |
| b. I enjoy working with people. | 47 (22%) |
| c. I enjoy working with books. | 99 (46%) |
| d. I enjoy working with technology. | 4 (2%) |
| e. I wanted to get more involved with community. | 18 (8%) |
| f. Other, please specify _____ | 32 (15%) |

Q3. What do you feel is your most important role as a librarian?
Circle one answer.

- | | |
|---|----------|
| a. Information provider. | 74 (34%) |
| b. To help people. | 96 (44%) |
| c. collecting and organizing library materials. | 12 (5%) |
| d. Promoting libraries and library services. | 28 (13%) |
| e. Other (please specify): _____ | 9 (4%) |

Q4. Please indicate the extent to which the following descriptions characterize your library work. Circle your answers.

- | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------------|
| a. Challenging | YES 174 (75%) | NO 3 (1%) | SOMEWHAT 54 (23%) |
| a. Creative | YES 141 (62%) | NO 10 (4%) | SOMEWHAT 77 (34%) |
| c. Dynamic/exciting | YES 85 (38%) | NO 24 (11%) | SOMEWHAT 114 (51%) |
| d. Flexible | YES 152 (67%) | NO 10 (4%) | SOMEWHAT 65 (29%) |

- e. Repetitive/Routine YES 52 (24%) NO 60 (27%)
SOMEWHAT 109 (49%)
- f. Rewarding YES 206 (92%) NO 0% SOMEWHAT 17 (8%)
- g. Service-oriented YES 202 (92%) NO 3 (1%)
SOMEWHAT 15 (7%)
- h. Stressful YES 49 (22%) NO 64 (29%)
SOMEWHAT 106 (48%)
- i. Technological YES 129 (58%) NO 19 (8%)
SOMEWHAT 76 (34%)
- j. Intellectually stimulating YES 171 (73%) NO 13 (5%)
SOMEWHAT 51 (22%)
- k. Recognition/status YES 39 (17%) NO 67 (30%)
SOMEWHAT 118 (53%)

**Q5. Why do you think librarians have historically been underpaid.
Please circle all that apply.**

- a. The public does not value librarians. 94 (33%)
- b. Community lacks funds. 129 (46%)
- c. Library services are non-essential. 30 (11%)
- d. Other, please indicate:_____ 28 (10%)

**Q6. How would you describe your overall job satisfaction.
Circle answer.**

- a. Very satisfied. 147 (64%)
- b. Somewhat satisfied. 59 (27%)
- c. Somewhat dissatisfied. 24 (10%)
- d. Very dissatisfied. 0

**Q7. Do you plan to be a librarian for the rest of your career?
Circle answer.**

YES 109 (56%) NO 23 (12%) NOT SURE 63 (32%)

**Q8. What do you like most about being a librarian?
Circle one response.**

- a. Working with books. 33 (15%)
- b. The opportunity to make a difference
in someone's life. 73 (33%)
- c. Interacting with the community. 100 (45%)
- d. Other, please indicate_____ 17 (8%)

**Q9. What is your primary complaint with being a librarian?
Circle one response.**

- | | |
|--|----------|
| a. Repetitive. | 7 (3%) |
| b. No respect from the community. | 6 (3%) |
| a. Not enough money to buy new materials
or technology. | 86 (38%) |
| b. Low pay. | 48 (21%) |
| c. No complaints. | 45 (20%) |
| d. Other, please specify_____ | 36 (16%) |

**In the next questions, we want to know how you feel about the
role your library plays in your community.**

**Q10. Do you feel that part of your role as a public librarian is to be:
Circle answers.**

- a. A community leader? YES 147 (72%)NO 56 (28%)
- b. A role model to young people YES 184 (93%)NO 13 (7%)
- c. Involved in community affairs and planning? YES 160 (79%)
NO 43 (21%)
- d. A member in various community organizations? YES 126 (62%)
NO 77 (38%)

**Q11. Do you feel that librarians should take an active role in their
community's economic development? Circle answer.**
YES 78 (34%) NO 30 (13%) SOMEWHAT 120 (53%)

**Q12. Do you feel your community respects and values what you do?
Circle answer.**
YES 108 (47%) NO 13 (6%) SOMEWHAT 109 (47%)
If NO, why not_____

Q13. Do you think your library...

- a. Contributes to making life better in your community?
YES 216 (98%)NO 5 (2%)
- b. Contributes to the economy in your community?
YES 95 (47%) NO 109 (53%)
- c. Has made a difference in people's lives?
YES 216 (99%) NO 2 (1%)
- d. Plays a vital role in your community?
YES 183 (88%) NO 37 (17%)

The following statements are about librarians and libraries. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement: Circle answers.

- Q14. Librarians enjoy working more with books than technology.
AGREE 106 (46%) DISAGREE 56 (25%) NOT SURE 66(29%)
- Q15. Librarians need to embrace technology and make it the focus of their profession.
AGREE 61 (26%) DISAGREE 105 (45%) NOT SURE 69 (29%)
- Q16. The media stereotypes librarians negatively.
AGREE 72 (32%) DISAGREE 76 (32%) NOT SURE 74 (33%)
- Q17. Assertiveness and excellent communication skills are essential to being an effective librarian.
AGREE 200 (87%) DISAGREE 13 (6%) NOT SURE 16 (7%)
- Q18. Information manager is a more apt title for the 21st century librarian.
AGREE 143 (62%) DISAGREE 35 (15%) NOT SURE 51 (22%)
- Q19. Librarians are community leaders.
AGREE 140 (62%) DISAGREE 34 (15%) NOT SURE 53 (23%)
- Q20. The library exists primarily to provide books and other materials to its patrons.
AGREE 125 (55%) DISAGREE 78 (34%) NOT SURE 25 (11%)
- Q21. Libraries need to be more aggressive in marketing the services they provide.
AGREE 182 (79%)DISAGREE 9 (4%) NOT SURE 39 (17%)

In this age of the Internet and electronic resources many people are questioning the need for a public library. In the next set of questions, we want to get your opinion about the future of librarianship and libraries.

- Q22. Do you worry that your job may become obsolete because of advances in technology?
YES 12 (5%) NO 177 (77%) SOMEWHAT 41 (18%)
- Q23. Would you encourage your children or a young person to pursue librarianship as a career?
YES 157 (68%) NO 31 (13%)SOMEWHAT 43 (19%)

Q24. In the future, do you feel the library will be more important or less important to society? Circle answer.

- | | |
|--------------------|----------|
| a. More important. | 89 (34%) |
| b. Less important. | 29 (13%) |
| c. About the same. | 99 (43%) |
| d. Not sure. | 13 (6%) |

Q25. In your opinion what is the greatest challenge facing libraries? Circle one answer.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| a. Funding. | 149 (63%) |
| b. Community involvement. | 39 (17%) |
| c. Competition from the Internet. | 36 (15%) |
| d. Other, please specify _____ | 12 (5%) |

Q26. Do you think the continued growth of the Internet will make physical libraries less important in the future? Circle answer.
YES 37 (16%) NO 137 (60%) NOT SURE 55 (24%)

Q27. Do you feel that fewer people use the library because they can get their information at home using the Internet? Circle answer.

YES 69 (32%) NO 98 (45%) NOT SURE 50 (23%)

These final questions are about you.

Q28. What is your highest level of education? Please specify _____

- | | |
|----------------------|----------|
| Less than HS diploma | (0%) |
| HS diploma | 68 (29%) |
| Some College | 59 (26%) |
| Associate's Degree | 10 (4%) |
| BA/BS | 2 (23%) |
| M.L.S | 10 (4%) |
| Other Master's | 28 (12%) |
| Ph.D. | 1 (0%) |

Q29. My age is. Please circle range.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------|
| a. 20-39 | 26 (11%) |
| b. 40-59 | 129 (57%) |
| c. 60 or above | 71 (31%) |

Q30. Please indicate your gender. Circle answer.

MALE 4 (1%) FEMALE 228 (99%)