Disruption and Demoralization in Academic Libraries: A Snapshot

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abstract: This article discusses a specific subset of results from an exploratory survey deployed in September 2021. Quantitative and qualitative results of this exploratory survey were considerable, and as such, this article focuses on question responses related to library workers' perceptions of themselves and others during times of change and views of their place in academic librarianship now and in the future. Overall, survey respondents demonstrated a high level of self-confidence and personal agency as library workers, but also illustrated consistent themes of demoralization, with respondents sometimes or often considering leaving their current roles (78 percent) or the profession entirely (60 percent).

Introduction

As the pace of change continues to accelerate in libraries, these organizations must reckon with efficiently and nimbly adapting to meet the needs of users and outside stakeholders. Library literature is rich with articles about change management, often written by leaders for leaders, much of which deals with change at an organizational and structural level.[1] Less has been written about how library workers themselves experience change to their roles or to their organizations, and what impacts those experiences of change have on their professional identities and outlooks on their professional futures. Finally, while there is research examining why librarians leave their organizations, the literature shows a gap in research focusing on academic library workers who are at an inflection point in deciding whether to leave their current employment.[2]

This exploratory study aims to fill that gap. The authors developed quantitative and qualitative survey questions in conjunction with broader themes of the affective impact of individual library workers' experiences with change, now and as perceived in the future. However, the responses shared by library workers differed significantly from

what the authors anticipated. The onset of the global coronavirus pandemic brought a new meaning to the concept of change, one that was reflected in the wide-ranging, candid, and vulnerable responses participants shared.

This article details results from a specific subset of survey questions focusing on the effect of job changes or disruptions on academic library workers' relationships within their libraries, as well as their own views of their place and future in the library profession. The questions discussed in this article are: (1) how do library workers experience support from coworkers, supervisors, and their institutions during times of change? and (2) how is this experience of support reconceptualizing library workers' views of their organizations, the profession, and their futures?

The answers to these questions demonstrate that academic library workers have a high level of personal agency and a high level of self-confidence during times of change, yet are also experiencing burnout, demoralization, and disillusionment with their organizations. This research affirms other recent studies about low morale in libraries and adds to the literature by providing a vivid snapshot of academic library workers' affective states during times of national crisis and related organizational changes.[3] This study is one of the first large-scale, national investigations into academic library workers' experience of change during a global pandemic and its resulting impacts on job satisfaction, demoralization, and intention to leave. The subset of research discussed in this paper is relevant and timely for what it suggests about academic library workers' job dissatisfaction and intention to leave; 78 percent of respondents sometimes or often think about leaving for a different institution, and 60 percent often or sometimes think about pursuing another career altogether.

Literature Review

Library Workers' Perceptions of Themselves and Others During Change

Library workers are no strangers to change, and research has explored how the intersection of technology and changing roles has affected library workers' professional identities.[4] As roles change, the importance of adapting becomes critical to continued workplace success and satisfaction. Research within the past decade has explored how academic librarians can improve career adaptability by choosing to experience disruption as a positive force that can be a catalyst for positive outcomes.[5]

Depending on the cause of the change or disruption, library workers may feel a range of agency in their options for responding to the change and integrating it into their professional identity and self-perception. Research done with physicians, who hold strong professional identities as well as identities of "self-in-role," affirmed that the amount of agency an actor has over the change being made corresponds to less resistance and more acceptance of changes, an important distinction from other

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research on role change.[6] Library workers may conceptualize individual adaptations to organizational or role change, as they are required to learn new skills and transform their approach to work.[7]

Professional Identity and Affective States During Times of Change

Research also shows that in addition to agency and personal affective states such as optimism, support from colleagues and supervisors is a critical aspect of career adaptability.[8] A library worker's relationship with their direct manager can be an especially important factor that affects their morale, in positive or negative ways.[9] Library workers may have a particularly hard time adapting to change when perceiving changes to their roles as inconclusive or uncertain, which can lead to cognitive dissonance when attempting to integrate new tasks into their professional identities.[10]

Research on professional identity has taken many forms. Some studies focus on shifts to professional identity when role change occurs, where others focus on identity development in library workers.[11] Research has demonstrated that although professional identities can be dynamic and adaptable, workers may view changes to their roles as direct challenges to their identities and may have trouble transitioning to a new definition of who they are within their field.[12] Other research within librarianship has included investigations into identity development among library and information science (LIS) graduates with careers outside librarianship, recent graduates, and academic librarians with teaching responsibilities; public and academic librarians' connections of professional identity to specific professional values and standards; the relationship between academic librarians' professional identities and their faculty/tenure status; and how the intersection of technology and changing roles has affected library workers' professional identities over the past five decades.[13]

Studies have shown that the professional identities formed in graduate school are often just starting points, where further identity development occurs on the job and is informed by a delineation between "library" work and "other" work.[14] When changes to job roles occur, it is often necessary for library workers to find similarities to align their new roles and tasks with their prior conceptions of what it meant to be a librarian.[15] Depending on the cause of the change or disruption, library workers may feel a range of agency in their options for responding to the change and integrating it into their professional identity and self-perception.

Library workers' contemporaneous and situational aptitude for hope and resilience can positively influence how they experience change. Research with undergraduate populations demonstrate their confidence in adapting to technological change and navigating uncertainty and disruption in their chosen professions, and show a correlation between students who self-report as hopeful and perceive themselves to have a high degree of career adaptability.[16] Research with employees across industries, including those at a public library, also demonstrated that how employees view and approach change can have far-reaching effects.[17]

Although feelings of optimism have been associated with greater adaptiveness to changes, it is important to note that adaptiveness does not mean that employees only experience positive feelings about the change.[18] In fact, some studies have shown that

adaptiveness to professional change includes the ability to move back and forth between positive and negative emotions, recognizing that a willingness to meet the changes does not erase any negative feelings associated with that change.[19]

When role changes occur in libraries, employees reported that support from their organizations, including from colleagues and supervisors, was crucial and informed their affective states during the change. [20] Employees in these situations desired role clarity and active participation in the change, an understanding by library administration that each person will experience shifts to their professional identities differently, and communication about role changes from all levels of the organizational hierarchy.

Prior research has shown that sufficient and clear communication about the role change, employee participation in the change process, and support from colleagues and supervisors led to more adaptive outcomes.[21] For example, research with mental health workers has shown that supervisor support was associated with lower levels of employee cynicism, even when change-related stress was high, while high levels of job control were associated with greater professional efficacy.[22]

In comparison, when changes are turbulent; stressful; ongoing; or experienced as a loss, threat, or challenge to their existing identities, workers may experience negative outcomes. These outcomes include indifference to their job or organization, disengagement, and burnout, defined as "1) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, 2) increased mental distance from one's job or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job, and 3) reduced professional efficacy."[23] Prior research has shown an inverse relationship between levels of supervisor support and levels of employee cynicism and emotional exhaustion: When supervisor support is low, employee cynicism and emotional exhaustion increase, and when supervisor support is high, employee cynicism and emotional exhaustion decreases.[24]

Systemic Determinants of Burnout and Demoralization

In addition to examining the individual-level factors that mediate burnout, such as personal job control or supervisor support, research has also examined systemic factors within specific professions that mediate burnout. Much of this research has focused on human services and education professions, which involve "the emotional challenges of working intensively with other people in either a caregiving or teaching role."[25] Research on burnout in library professionals is also abundant, including articles that focus on academic libraries,[26] liaisons at academic libraries, new librarians, graduate LIS students, school libraries, and public libraries.[27] Previous research with library workers who interface with the public has found that these individuals may be at particular risk for developing burnout because of the heightened emotional labor and emotional stress within their jobs.[28]

Library professionals may also be uniquely susceptible to demoralization. Although similar to burnout in many ways, demoralization occurs when workers' values do not align with their employer's values and/or when workers cannot access the moral rewards that used to be hallmarks of their work.[29] Those who work in professions that double as vocations, such as healthcare, social services, non-profits, and education, are often attracted to this type of work because of their own personal values and morals,

which appear to be shared with others in the organization or the profession at large.[30] When values-related or moral dissonance occurs between workers and employers in such situations, workers may experience demoralization and may consider leaving their organization or profession altogether.[31]

With a strong foundation in vocational awe, librarianship is at particularly high risk for low morale, a concept closely related to demoralization.[32] Previous research on low morale in librarianship has focused on librarians' and library workers' experiences of low morale, academic librarians' intention to leave their current jobs because of low morale and the impact factors that influenced their decisions, and the impacts of library organizational cultures and management on library staff morale.[33] This research has also clearly demonstrated that library professionals who identify as racial or ethnic minorities experience significantly lower morale than their white counterparts.[34]

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Intention to Leave

Why do burnout and demoralization matter? Aside from the very real impacts to workers, burnout and demoralization are connected, while not precisely correlated, to workers planning to leave their jobs and succeeding in leaving their jobs.[35] This connection has been studied across industries, including hospitality, fitness, nursing, law, K-12 teachers, higher education, and academic libraries.[36] Resignations affect the worker who leaves as well as the entire organization, including the workers who stay. For example, in discussing how the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated library workers' experiences of burnout and eventual resignations, the American Library Association's Office for Human Resource Development and Recruitment and ALA–Allied Professional Association reported that the workers "who are left are overwhelmed and overworked. They're having to pick up the slack and they're not being compensated, so they get burned out."[37]

Even if employees experiencing burnout stay in their current job and with their current organization, other forms of disconnection can occur. These can include not showing up to work, "lower productivity and effectiveness at work[,] …decreased job satisfaction[,] and a reduced commitment to the job or the organization."[38] Research has also shown that one employee's experiences of burnout can have negative impacts on their colleagues and organizations, which can manifest as an increase in personal conflict between colleagues and instances of "contagious" burnout.[39]

When examining ways to address burnout, evidence has shown that interventions must focus on individuals, managers/supervisors, and organizations.[40] For example, although workers may benefit from having opportunities to learn personal strategies for increasing their capacity for career adaptability and coping with professional changes, leaders must also examine and critique the structures and systems within their organizations in order to sufficiently address the causes of burnout and increase worker engagement.[41]

This study examines library workers' perceptions of themselves and others during times of change and their self-declared intentions to stay or leave their role, institution, or profession, with a special focus on workers' affective states in describing features of burnout and disillusionment.

Methods

In fall 2021, the authors sent a link to a Qualtrics survey via ALA Connect to the ACRL Members List and to 12 additional lists that were specific to ACRL sections, interest groups, or communities. The survey was also distributed via three regional library listservs. The 28-item anonymous survey included four blocks with closed and open-ended questions: Block 1—Informed Consent, Block 2—Professional Role Changes or Disruptions in Last Five Years, Block 3—Questions about Professional Role Satisfaction, and Block 4—Demographic Questions (Appendix A). In developing this survey instrument, the authors utilized and adapted questions from published survey instruments related to overall job satisfaction and professional role change.[42] The authors also wrote new survey questions that were specific to an academic library environment and would better investigate factors that may contribute to workers' job satisfaction and workers' experiences with the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey research described in this article was approved by the University of Idaho Institutional Review Board (Protocol Number: 21-133) as an exempt study under Category 2 at 45 CFR 46.104(d)(2), meaning that a full or expedited review was not required. An exemption under Category 2 at 45 CFR 46.104(d)(2) means that the research involved a specific type of interaction (like a survey) and met at least one of three criteria related to protecting the identities of human subjects and the level of risk or damage to human subjects if their responses were shared outside the research.[43] Two ways that the authors protected respondents' identities and mitigated these potential risks were choosing not to ask personally identifying questions (such as institution name, position title, etc.) and ensuring that the authors removed any identifying information and identified respondents by a randomized ID, rather than sharing demographic details, such as role, institution type, etc., when sharing direct quotes from respondents' open-text box responses.

The authors collected survey responses between September 22, 2021, and November 5, 2021 (45 days). Quantitative data were analyzed using Qualtrics' reports and cross-tabs features. Qualitative data, gathered from two open text-box responses, were coded collaboratively in a shared Excel sheet for overall sentiment and themes. In total, four sentiments (positive, negative, neutral, and mixed) and 40 thematic codes were identified. Counts of thematic codes across the two open text-box questions (Q2.13 and Q3.7) are available in Appendix B. The authors chose to code these responses collaboratively instead of independently in an attempt to clarify and contextualize shared topics and concepts represented in responses, rather than independently analyzing response subtext. Each open text-box response could include multiple thematic codes, but only one sentiment code was applied. Lastly, percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding to the nearest whole number.

Results

Respondent Demographics

In total, 295 academic library workers responded to this survey. Of these, the authors excluded eighty-two responses from analysis: Seventy-eight responses were left unfinished and were not submitted, and four responses were from persons residing outside the United States (per IRB approval). This resulted in 213 responses for analysis, with question logic influencing which respondents viewed which questions and some respondents choosing not to answer specific questions but still submitting the survey. Within the text, table, and appendices, the number of respondents who answered a question is reported as "n = number." Most respondents held a master's degree in library and or/ information studies (87 percent) and a plurality of respondents indicated that they were between thirty-six and forty-five years old (30 percent), with the next highest response option being forty-six to fifty-five years old (24 percent). When examining respondents' employment demographics, a plurality of respondents had worked in an academic library for more than twenty years (29 percent) or five to nine years (26 percent) and indicated that they were tenured/tenure-track librarians (34 percent). A majority of respondents selected instruction (57 percent) and reference (56 percent) as their primary job duties, a majority worked at a doctoral college/university (51 percent), and a plurality indicated that the approximate enrollment at their institution was less than 5,000 students (31 percent). Please see Table 1 for a complete breakdown of respondents' demographic data.

For questions related to gender identity and racial or ethnic identity, the authors asked respondents to self-identify and share the term/terms they use within two open text-box questions. When asked to share their gender identity (n = 210), the majority of respondents listed female, "F," woman, or women (75 percent). A smaller percentage listed male (14 percent); selected "prefer not to answer" (7 percent); or listed other gender identities, including, but not limited to, agender, femme, and nonbinary (3 percent). When asked to share their racial or ethnic identity (n = 210), the majority of respondents listed white, Caucasian, Non-Hispanic, or a combination of these terms (78 percent). A smaller percentage listed other racial and ethnic identities, including, but not limited to, Black, African American, Latina, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, Biracial, and Native American (13 percent), or selected "prefer not to answer" (10 percent). The authors have elected not to list the count and percentage of all the gender identities and racial or ethnic identities shared to protect the anonymity of our respondents (Table 1).

In the following subsections, data is presented for all respondents as well as broken down by specific demographic variables, such as age, MLS/MLIS status, role, and institution type, if considerable differences are seen between groups. However, it is important to note that tests of statistical significance and correlation between questions and demographic variables were not run. Additionally, as shown in Table 1, our respondents were not equally distributed across these demographic groups, with the majority having an MLS/MLIS degree (87 percent), a plurality (60 percent) identifying as tenured/tenure-track librarians (34 percent) or non-tenure track/clinical librarians (26 percent), and a majority working at a doctoral college/university (51 percent). Therefore, any responses broken down by demographic variables are not generalizable.

Table 1.
Respondent Demographics

Do you hold a master's degree in library and/or information studies (MLS, MILS, MLIS, etc.)? (n = 212)	Count	Percent
Yes	185	87%
Currently pursuing degree	2	1%
No	25	12%

What is your age? (n = 212)	Count	Percent
18–25	1	0.5%
26–35	42	20%
36–45	64	30%
46–55	50	24%
56–65	37	17%
66–75	12	6%
75+	1	0.5%
Prefer not to answer	5	2%

What is your gender identity? (n = 210; open-text box question)	Count	Percentage
Female, "F," woman, or women	158	75%
Male	30	14%
Other gender identities, including, but not limited to: Agender, Femme, and Nonbinary	7	3%
Prefer not to answer	15	7%

What is your racial or ethnic identity? (n = 210; open text-box question)	Count	Percentage
White, Caucasian, Non-Hispanic, or a combination of these terms	163	78%
Other racial or ethnic identities, including, but not limited to: Black, African American, Latina, Latino, Asian American Pacific Islander, Biracial, and Native American	27	13%
Prefer not to answer	20	10%

Table 1., Cont.

What is your current role? (n = 212)	Count	Percent
Administrator	25	12%
Tenured / tenure-track librarian	73	34%
Non-tenure track / clinical librarian	55	26%
Library staff	34	16%
Other[1]	25	12%

How long have you worked in an academic library? (n = 212)	Count	Percent
Less than 4 years	21	10%
5 to 9 years	56	26%
10 to 14 years	37	17%
15 to 19 years	36	17%
More than 20 years	62	29%

What are your primary job duties? (n = 212; could select more than one answer)	Count	Percent
Administration	58	27%
Access Services	49	23%
Archives and special collections	17	8%
Collection management	77	36%
Data services	21	10%
Digital humanities	11	5%
Instruction	121	57%
Reference	120	56%
Scholarly communication	20	9%
Subject liaison	90	42%
Technical services	53	25%
Other[2]	52	24%
Prefer not to answer	1	0.4%

What type of higher education institution do you currently work at? (n = 212)	Count	Percent
Associate's / Community College	29	14%
Baccalaureate College	28	13%
Master's College / University	42	20%
Doctoral College / University	108	51%
Other	5	2%

Table 1., Cont.

What is the approximate total enrollment at your higher education institution? (n = 212)	Count	Percent
Less than 5000	65	31%
5001 to 10000	37	17%
10001 to 15000	19	9%
15001 to 20000	18	8%
20001 to 25000	20	9%
More than 25001	46	22%
Unsure	6	3%
Prefer not to answer	1	0.5%

Where is your higher education institution located? (n = 212)	Count	Percent
Northeastern United States	31	15%
Midwestern United States	36	17%
Southern United States	39	18%
Western United States	96	45%
Other	9	4%
Prefer not to answer	1	0.5%

[1] Within the "Other" text-box for the current role question, most respondents listed roles that could have been classified within one of the other four pre-determined role types.

[2] Within the "Other" textbox for the primary job duties question, respondents listed duties such as acquisitions, assessment, cataloging and metadata, copyright, digital collections, electronic resources, fiscal management, fundraising, IT, OER, outreach, and preservation.

Library Workers' Perceptions of Themselves and Others

Overall, the majority of respondents to this exploratory survey indicated that they have a positive view of librarianship as a profession, with 71 percent of respondents agreeing that they enjoy being an academic library worker, 56 percent agreeing that they believe they have a meaningful place in their library, and 55 percent agreeing that they feel secure in who they are as a librarian (n = 212). When examining these questions by role, more administrators agreed that they have a meaningful place in their library (72 percent), when compared to tenured/tenure-track librarians (59 percent), non-tenure track/clinical librarians (53 percent), and library staff (44 percent).When looking at the factors that contributed to their satisfaction at work (n = 212), all factors were selected as important by more than 50 percent of respondents. The factors selected as important by 75 percent or more respondents were: their daily tasks and activities (86 percent), their relationship with their coworkers (85 percent), their relationship with their supervisor (81 percent), their personal values/ethics (80 percent), belief that their library cares about them as an employee (78 percent), and an alignment between their own values/ethics and those of their library (76 percent). Selected as important less frequently, but still representing the majority of respondents, were: their cumulative experiences as an academic library worker (72 percent), respondents' professional identity (69 percent), belief that their institution cares about them as an employee (65 percent), their position in their current library (64 percent), an alignment between their own values/ethics and those of their institution (63 percent), and their personal identity (53 percent).

Another aspect of this study examined library workers' experiences with changes or disruptions in their responsibilities, duties, tasks, etc. while working in academic libraries and how these changes affected their perceptions of themselves and others as well as their plans for the future. Overall, 96 percent of respondents indicated that they had experienced this type of change within the last five years: for 77 percent of respondents, their most significant change during this time-period was either entirely (31 percent) or partially (46 percent) related to the Covid-19 pandemic (n = 204). When their most significant change or disruption was occurring (n = 204), 42 percent of respondents agreed that they had some control over the change or disruption proposed, while 44 percent disagreed with this statement. Relatedly, slightly more than half agreed (52 percent) that they were able to participate in the implementation of this change or disruption, with only 27 percent disagreeing with this statement (n = 204). A plurality disagreed when asked if they received enough information to prepare for the change or disruption (46 percent) and if the information they received about the change or disruption was timely (43 percent). Some respondents agreed that the information they received about the change or disruption was useful (31 percent), but a similar percentage of respondents selected neutral (36 percent) or disagreed (29 percent). Overall, a small majority of respondents disagreed (54 percent) that the information they received adequately answered all of their questions about the change or disruption (n = 204). A majority of respondents also disagreed when asked whether they knew exactly what was expected of them, with regard to the change or disruption (57 percent), and whether they felt their tasks were clearly defined (57 percent).

When examining support from supervisors and coworkers (n = 204), a majority of respondents agreed that their supervisor cared whether this change or disruption affected the respondent (53 percent) and more than half of respondents (59 percent) agreed that they had coworkers who could support them in this change or disruption. However, when respondents were asked whether they felt like they had sufficient support to navigate this change or disruption, 23 percent agreed, 32 percent selected neutral, and 45 percent disagreed; and 84 percent agreed that they felt responsible for supporting themselves in this change or disruption (n = 204). When asked whether their most significant change or disruption affected how they viewed themselves and others, slight differences emerged (n = 204). When asked whether this change or disruption affected how they viewed themselves as a librarian, responses were almost evenly split between "Yes, in a positive way" (30 percent), "Yes, in a negative way" (26 percent), and "No" (30 percent). When respondents were asked whether this change or disruption affected how they viewed their coworkers, 29 percent selected "Yes, in a positive way," 32 percent selected "Yes, in a negative way," and 27 percent selected "No."

When asked about other people or entities (n = 204), slight differences emerged. Forty percent (40 percent) of respondents indicated that this change or disruption negatively affected how they viewed their supervisors, 20 percent indicated that this change or disruption positively affected how they viewed their supervisors, and 27 percent indicated that it did not affect how they viewed their supervisors. Sixty percent indicated that this change or disruption negatively affected how they viewed their institution, 12 percent indicated that this change or disruption positively affected how they viewed their supervisors, and 18 percent indicated that it did not affect how they viewed their supervisors.

Respondents were also asked to share their own perspectives as to whether and how their coworkers, supervisor, library, or institution could have better supported them during and after this change or disruption in an open text-box question (Q2.13, n = 131). Overall, coding of these qualitative responses demonstrated that respondents felt unsupported by colleagues or supervisors (48 percent) and experienced a lack of care or empathy from others during and after this change (40 percent). Some participants highlighted negative feelings and experiences that resulted from insufficient communication, information, collaboration, or preparation (51 percent) and/or a lack of recognition for the work that they had done (27 percent). Of the 131 responses to this question, ninety-seven were coded as having negative sentiment, twenty-three as having mixed sentiment, six as having positive sentiment, and five as having neutral sentiment.

A Place in Academic Libraries, Now and in the Future

When asked about their professional role now (n = 212), 75 percent of respondents agreed it is different than the professional role they envisioned. When asked whether their role now is better than what they envisioned, a plurality of respondents selected neutral (41 percent), followed by disagree (31 percent), and agree (27 percent). A slight majority of respondents also agreed when asked if they believe they have control over the direction their career takes (55 percent). When this question was examined by respondent role, more tenured/tenure-track librarians agreed (73 percent) that they have control over

the direction their career takes, when compared to administrators (48 percent), non-tenure track/clinical librarians (45 percent), and library staff (26 percent). A majority of respondents also agreed that the changes occurring in academic librarianship cause them stress (60 percent), while a plurality agreed that they feel exhausted by the amount of change they have experienced over their career (48 percent). When asked whether they feel energized by the amount of change they have experienced over their career (n = 212), respondents selected agree (32 percent), neutral (34 percent), and disagree (33 percent) at almost equal rates. When examining answers to this question by role, administrators were the only group where the majority of respondents selected agree (68 percent) when asked whether they feel energized by the amount of change they have experienced over their career; the majority of library staff selected disagree (56 percent), a plurality of tenured/tenure-track librarians selected neutral (41 percent), and a plurality of non-tenured/clinical librarians selected disagree (42 percent).

Looking ahead to their potential place in academic libraries (n = 212), a majority of respondents disagreed (64 percent) when asked whether academic librarianship was leaving them behind. Overall, 59 percent agreed when asked if they believe they can meaningfully contribute to the future of academic librarianship, and a plurality agreed when asked if they felt confident they will have a place in the future of academic libraries (48 percent). However, fewer respondents from baccalaureate colleges agreed (36 percent) that they could meaningfully contribute to the future of academic librarianship when compared with those from associate's/community colleges (66 percent), master's colleges/universities (69 percent), and doctoral colleges/universities (59 percent). Comparatively, fewer non-tenure track/clinical librarians (44 percent) and library staff (32 percent) agreed that they could meaningfully contribute to the future of academic librarianship statement compared to administrators (80 percent), and tenured/tenure-track librarians (74 percent). When looking at whether respondents felt confident they will have a place in the future of academic libraries, administrators (64 percent) and tenured/tenure-track librarians (63 percent) agreed at a higher rate, when compared to non-tenure track/clinical librarians (38 percent) and library staff (29 percent).

In an effort to learn more about respondents' plans for their future, they were also asked to share how they saw their professional life unfolding over the next five years within an open text-box question (Q3.7, n = 183). Coding these qualitative responses revealed that although respondents were often undecided on which action they would take, 54 percent expressed feelings of self-empowerment or shared the personal initiative they planned to take. When examining respondents' discussions of their plans, 42 percent discussed plans to "leave" (leave their current job or current institution and go somewhere else, leave academic librarianship and pursue another career, or retire), 37 percent discussed plans to adapt (stay in their current environment, but adapt to library or profession's changes), and 32 percent expressed uncertainty about the future. A smaller proportion of respondents shared other plans, with 20 percent of respondents discussing how they planned to maintain the status quo (no stated plan, just maintaining/sustaining the current environment—hanging on), 18 percent discussing plans to thrive (excited about current environment, changes, vision for future), and 18 percent discussing feelings of resignation with their current and future situations (the "grass isn't greener;" feeling resigned that things probably aren't better elsewhere, frustration

with profession, disillusionment with field). Of the 183 responses to this question, fifty-one were coded as having positive sentiment, forty-seven as having neutral sentiment, forty-three as having negative sentiment, and forty-two as having mixed sentiment.

When asked a targeted question about their future career choices, in light of the changes or disruptions they had experienced over the last five years, 78 percent of respondents indicated that they often (41 percent) or sometimes (37 percent) thought about moving to a different institution. In response to the prompt about considerations for moving to a different institution by respondent age, often or sometimes were selected more frequently by respondents who were twenty-six to thirty-five (90 percent; often = 50 percent, sometimes = 40 percent), thirty-six to forty-five (82 percent; often = 44 percent, sometimes = 38 percent) and forty-six to fifty-five (88 percent; often = 36 percent, sometimes = 52 percent), when compared to respondents who were fifty-six to sixty-five (54 percent; often = 32 percent, sometimes = 22 percent) and who were sixty-six to seventy-five (50 percent; often = 33 percent, sometimes = 17 percent). Overall, 60 percent of respondents also indicated that they often (31 percent) or sometimes (30 percent) thought about pursuing another career outside of librarianship. Of the twenty-five respondents who did not have an MLIS degree and were not currently pursuing one, 84 percent indicated that they often (36 percent) or sometimes (48 percent) considered thought about pursuing another career outside of librarianship. Of the 185 respondents who did have an MLS/MLIS degree, 57 percent indicated that they often (30 percent) or sometimes (27 percent) considered pursuing another career outside of librarianship. Overall, 57 percent of respondents indicated that they often (23 percent) or sometimes (34 percent) thought about pursuing librarianship outside of academia. More than half of respondents (54 percent) also indicated that they often (20 percent) or sometimes (34 percent) thought about moving to a different role in their library. Considerations for pursuing early retirement were split between N/A (28 percent), rarely (28 percent), often (27 percent), and sometimes (16 percent); while considerations for moving to a different subfield in academic librarianship were split between sometimes (35 percent) and rarely (42 percent). When looking at pursuing early retirement, respondents who self-identified as forty-six and older (n = 100) selected often (43 percent) and sometimes (20 percent) at higher rates than those who self-identified as forty-five and younger (n = 107) (12 percent and 13 percent, respectively).

Discussion

Quantitative data and qualitative responses to open text-box questions demonstrated that respondents have experienced challenges when navigating professional changes and disruptions during the last five years, challenges that affected their perceptions of others and views of how they fit in the future of academic libraries. For many respondents, these challenges also contributed to feelings of burnout and demoralization and informed their intention to leave their institution or academic librarianship, with some respondents sharing that their experiences rose to the level of moral injury.

In the quotes below, identifying information has been omitted through the use of ellipses and/or by replacing specific terms with more general ones, as identified with brackets, to protect the anonymity of respondents while ensuring that the intent and meaning of the quotes was retained.

Library Workers' Perceptions of Themselves and Others

Based on the perspectives shared, it appears that a majority of respondents enjoy being an academic library worker and significant changes or disruptions to their professional situations have not affected how they view themselves. However, when looking at how these significant changes or disruptions affected their views of their coworkers, supervisors, libraries, and institutions, their perceptions are much less positive. When examining responses to responses to Q2.13 ("Is there anything that your coworkers, supervisor, library, or institution could have done to better support you during and after this change or disruption?"), qualitative coding more clearly illuminated how these changes or disruptions negatively impacted respondents' relationships with coworkers or supervisors, challenged their personal values/ethics, disrupted the prior notion that their own values/ethics were aligned with those of their library, and challenged their belief that their library cared about them as an employee.

> **Based on the perspectives shared, it appears that a majority of respondents enjoy being an academic library worker and significant changes or disruptions to their professional situations have not affected how they view themselves.**

This should be concerning when considering that more than 75 percent of all respondents stated that these factors were important to their job satisfaction. Often, these negative feelings were connected to a lack of recognition or compensation for the additional work taken on; frustrations with not being included or consulted when changes were occurring; or respondents' own admissions that their health, safety, experiences, and feelings were disregarded.

> "I was very flexible with [my employees] during the pandemic and they were not flexible with me… It really changed my perception of the people I work with and a lot of times I wondered why I even wanted [my role] or if I should stay in librarianship or change to a different career..." (Respondent #00174)

> "My supervisor never checked in with me to see how the transition to my new role was going; this made me feel like they didn't care about me as an employee." (Respondent #00009)

> "My department took on new duties and lost […] employees… Very few people even acknowledged the work we have been putting in the past year and a half, let alone asked us if we needed help." (Respondent #00028)

> "I would have liked to see the library director actively seeking the concerns, opinions, and ideas on how to make changes to the library from the staff and specialists working there rather than unilateral decision-making, or worse, pretending our input mattered, ignoring it, and not explaining why we were doing things the way we were." (Respondent #00162)

> "I felt like I could talk to my supervisor about it, but I don't think it changed anything or made it better. The decision was made without me, very abruptly and I didn't have a choice." (Respondent #00173)

"My co-workers are amazing. Our supervisor is [position title], who has no idea what hell we've been through and does not seem to care." (Respondent #00208)

"There is a large and growing divide between librarians and support staff…better communication (or really, ANY communication) would have been very helpful…any hint of caring about us as people (from our boss or [organizational] leadership) would have been welcome too." (Respondent #00023)

"The whole project was presented to me as a fait accompli with no understanding of the work involved in [the project]… It was hell and no one really cared or appreciated it. We are left with…a very real distrust of our administration." (Respondent #00193)

"The unwillingness to support mask mandates and other Covid mitigation measures greatly impacted how I felt about our library and campus leadership. They were unwilling to make difficult decisions that had the potential to alienate paying students, and they put students' misinformed biases ahead of the safety of library personnel." (Respondent #00036)

"…I was laid off… I felt so taken advantage of and foolish for pouring so much work and dedication into a place that treated me like I was disposable." (Respondent #00139)

"There was a lot of 'don't burn yourself out' sentiment but then the more work they suggested to take on contradicted that same sentiment. There is never a clear understanding on how much work is enough work. Then when the concept of this change and disruption impacts us, statements [from leadership] like, 'saying you['re] overworked isn't enough' causes low morale." (Respondent #00018)

"I wish they had sought our expertise and input. Everything moved so fast, decisions were made without on-the-ground knowledge of how students actually use the library. I (and my colleagues in the library) felt dismissed and disposable." (Respondent #00169)

"Library admin and institution admin also kept giving messages of care like how our health comes first and yet, they also told us students were the most important and through actions like forcing us back on campus and not giving us adequate time to adjust or take care ourselves was really disheartening." (Respondent #00180)

"The institution handled Covid better than many, but not necessarily well. It appeared that keeping up enrollment rates was a higher priority than the safety of library workers." (Respondent #00114)

However, some respondents (including Respondent #00208 above) did express appreciation for or understanding of their coworkers or supervisors and discussed how they got through these changes together:

"My coworkers are amazing. We all take great pride in what we do and in our library… we all work very hard to support each other." (Respondent #00037)

"It was a BIG shift in responsibilities. Admin did everything they could to support me shifting into a difficult role. My colleagues were also supportive." (Respondent #00115)

"If I had more knowledge about my responsibilities and roles ahead of time, I would have not been as stressed. This knowledge was not fully explained to my supervisor as well so it was hard for them to explain my role." (Respondent #00211)

"Given the quick shift to work from home, I felt that my supervisor and library were able to support my work needs, like IT, tip sheets, how to use the campus VPN, skype and Zoom. I felt like we were all in it which helped shape some camaraderie. My colleagues met on Zoom for some of the social elements. Netflix helped!" (Respondent #00134)

"While I feel my immediate team (supervisor and coworker) really worked to provide good services and support each other during the reduction in force I overall felt underwhelmed by the institutions [sic] response." (Respondents #00178)

A Place in Academic Libraries, Now and in the Future

Results also demonstrated a connection between the changes respondents had experienced over the last five years and their perspectives on their place in academic libraries. As discussed in the results section, the majority of respondents often or sometimes considered moving to a different institution (78 percent) or leaving librarianship entirely (60 percent). These findings are striking and point to the possibility of an existing or worsening morale crisis, which may signal an ongoing or upcoming staffing crisis in academic librarianship.

Overall, coding of responses to Q3.7 ("How do you see your professional life unfolding over the next five years?") demonstrate that considerations about leaving are tied to a desire to leave their current situation rather than seek a "golden opportunity" that they cannot turn down. Respondents shared candid and vulnerable assessments of their limited hopes for the future, resigned that the problems facing them would not necessarily improve by changing institutions:

"I think I will probably change careers. My library is broken and I'm not sure I'm mentally up to going elsewhere because I am worried I am now broken." (Respondent #00152)

"I'm so exhausted from the last three years—feeling like I've been doing an impossible job with little or no support—that I'd love to just retire, but I can't afford retirement. I'm struggling to see beyond academic librarianship as just a job for a paycheck. It used to be a profession in which I could excel and I really don't want to job hop for the rest of my working life." (Respondent #00173)

"We'll all be given more and more work, less employees to complete it, and no extra pay or other consideration for the continually increasing stress. But I'll probably still be here because this is what I've done my whole life and I don't really feel like I have skills applicable to another field and this job has me so exhausted I don't feel like I have anything left at the end of the day to make a change." (Respondent #00149)

"…I no longer feel my supervisor or institution have my best interests at heart and they don't seem to care about the contribution of librarians." (Respondent #00023)

"Honestly, I'm still where I am because I don't see any alternatives… my institution is taking advantage of myself and my coworkers. What they have done, and continue to

do, is morally reprehensible. It is likely that they will try to pile even more work on us with no promotions or raises. One of two things will happen. We will quit or have mental breakdowns." (Respondent #00037)

"Academic librarianship is a dying profession. I expect my position to be eliminated due to budget cuts. I am trying to build a skill set for another occupation or industry." (Respondent #00065)

"I just want to hang on to my job. I believe academic librarianship is dead." (Respondent #00080)

"I need to get out of librarianship. Will try to do that when (if?) my student loans are forgiven via PSLF. I'm not doing anything useful to the world and it is slowly draining me of life." (Respondent # 000102)

"I would retire today if the U.S. had universal health care. Truthfully? I no longer care about our students, my institution, or my work. The last year and a half have done me in." (Respondent #00052)

"I'm honestly not sure. I do think about getting out of higher education and libraries, but I do not know what I would do." (Respondent #00128)

"I've always been passionate about my work as a librarian and I put so much of myself into my job and my service to the library community. Now I'm disillusioned. I have no idea what the future holds." (Respondent #00139)

Many comments from respondents suggested disillusionment with the profession and an overall feeling of resignation or hopelessness regarding improvements in their job satisfaction or mobility. Yet these feelings of resignation and experiences represent only a subset of responses; other responses indicated similar disillusionment but a different approach to resolving it. Overall, the majority of respondents did indicate self-confidence and a sense of agency in seeking coping mechanisms for their current situations (54 percent), even if that meant leaving to go somewhere else, while some expressed intent to find meaning where they currently are.

> **Many comments from respondents suggested disillusionment with the profession and an overall feeling of resignation or hopelessness regarding improvements in their job satisfaction or mobility.**

"Five years! Who knows, I'm mostly taking it one year at a time and it is hard to know where things will go. I do see that I have rebounded from the bad situations in the past and it has helped equip me with some unexpected leadership skills in terms of managing bureaucratic BS in academic institutions. I very much love the idea of an ever-changing institution, which is exactly what libraries should be. It opens opportunities to challenge things like systemic racism, sexism, abilism [sic], etc. I plan to use the privilege of my current position to do good. It may sound cheesy, but if I didn't approach it that way I would wash out." (Respondent #00175)

"I'm hoping that I can put my head down and work on the projects that make me happy. The university and the library's responses to Covid have been stressful and have made me feel unvalued and unsafe. But the work itself is still really good!" (Respondent #00098)

"I still have a lot to do and a lot to offer, and I'm putting in place a research agenda that is meaningful to me and to my colleagues. By the time I retire I hope to have most elements of this agenda complete." (Respondent #00036)

"I hope that I will be able to keep advancing within my new institution, but if not then instead I will have found peace balancing my professional life with the demands of my personal life." (Respondent #00082)

"I didn't originally plan to become an academic librarian, but I do plan to become the best academic librarian for my school, students, and staff." (Respondent #00190)

What Can Academic Library Leaders Do to Address Library Workers' Experiences?

When taken together, quantitative and qualitative responses paint a picture of academic library workers in crisis, which has considerable consequences for staffing, morale, and disillusionment. When respondents were asked about their experiences navigating the most significant change or disruption in responsibilities, duties, tasks, etc. from the last five years, a majority disagreed when asked whether the information they received about the change or disruption adequately answered their questions (54 percent), whether they knew exactly what was expected of them (57 percent), and whether they felt their tasks were clearly defined (57 percent). Although 59 percent of respondents agreed that they had coworkers who could support them in in this change or disruption, a majority also agreed that they felt responsible for supporting themselves (84 percent), that they felt stressed about this change or disruption (86 percent), and that this change or disruption had an effect on their life outside of work (77 percent).

Even with these issues, changes, and disruptions, a majority of respondents agreed that they enjoy being an academic library worker (71 percent) and that they can mean-ingfully contribute to the future of academic librarianship (59 percent). This quantitative data, revealing significant issues within the profession as well as demonstrating work-ers' positive self-perceptions, is further reinforced by a subset of respondents' candid responses to our open text-box questions. When respondents were asked what support they needed from others during and after this change (Q2.13; n = 131), respondents often didn't come right out and say, "I needed x, y, z." Instead, as demonstrated by the subset of quotes included in the Discussion session, respondents identified barriers they experienced, such as insufficient communication, information, collaboration, and preparation (51 percent), unsupportive colleagues or supervisors (48 percent), and/or a lack of recognition for their work (27 percent). During and after this time of change, 40 percent of respondents who answered Q2.13 also indicated that they experienced a lack of care and/or empathy from those around them.

What can library administrators do to address the issues that have contributed to the burnout and demoralization of our respondents, creating libraries and organizations where workers thrive? Within the context of changes or disruptions to roles and tasks,

> **When taken together, quantitative and qualitative responses paint a picture of academic library workers in crisis, which has considerable consequences for staffing, morale, and disillusionment.**

previous research has indicated the need for organizations to be person-centered, acknowledging the unique strengths inherent in each person.[44] Library administrators can implement on-the-clock time for workers to engage in self-reflection and career planning as well as "offer[ing] the professionals in their organizations opportunities to learn, grow, and redefine themselves as part of their professional practice so that they will be able to both react to and enact ongoing change."[45]

While the quantitative and qualitative responses to this survey indicate the need for abstract (recognition that their work is seen and valued) and tangible (compensation and promotion) acknowledgement of academic library workers' efforts, both within their current roles and when they take on new responsibilities, results also indicate a desire for library administrators to recognize when the needs and circumstances of academic library workers change, by actively supporting, promoting, and modeling remote work and work/life balance. To support this need, library administrators can further develop their own management skills to embrace person-centered management philosophies, build a trauma-informed library culture, learn to look beyond surface-level complaints to uncover the root cause of organizational dysfunction, and reframe and dismantle resilience narratives.[46]

The authors acknowledge that library administrators themselves may not have the support or resources from their larger institutions to implement some of the solutions that address library worker burnout and demoralization, and that library administrators themselves may well be experiencing burnout and demoralization, as illuminated in some survey responses. For example, it may not be possible for library administrators to raise library worker wages on campuses undergoing enrollment crises and attendant budget shortfalls, or to add new library positions in the middle of a campus hiring freeze. Additionally, library administrators may be differently attuned to the perception of the library on campus and its perceived value among university administrators and outside stakeholders, possibly feeling that some library worker priorities may not reflect larger institutional priorities and could potentially have a negative impact on how the library is perceived, and perhaps even funded, going forward. For example, a recent study demonstrated that library leaders themselves felt unsupported by university administration during the Covid-19 pandemic.[47] Situations such as these may have an additional layer of moral or ethical complexity if library administrators are asked to implement decisions that are in direct conflict with their own personal values and beliefs. These are complex problems with no easy solutions. However, the authors believe it is imperative for library leaders to examine the factors that can and do contribute to library worker satisfaction, identify the factors that are in their control, and work to redress them.

Limitations and Future Research

As with all studies, this project experienced limitations that could be addressed in future research. Perhaps the largest limitation of this project is that its responses represent a snapshot in time: respondent attitudes may have changed in the time between survey deployment and article publication, particularly as pandemic and economic circumstances continue to evolve. Respondents intending to leave their current positions or institutions may have since found new positions or left the profession, or they may have changed their minds since the survey was delivered and chosen to remain at their institutions. Conducting additional longitudinal research with original survey respondents to analyze how their intentions to leave did or did not change over time could shed more light on affective factors that inform employee retention.

Another limitation of this research is the method of recruitment via ACRL and regional library discussion lists. This method resulted in a convenience sample, rather than a random sample, of academic library workers; this could be remedied in future research by expanding recruitment efforts to include additional academic library communities active on other platforms, such as social media. Expanding the survey pool to include a broader base of academic library workers domestically and internationally could add new perspectives to future findings and potentially lead to greater generalizability.

In addition to leveraging future research to address some of the limitations experienced in this project, the authors also see opportunities for these findings and questions to inform future research avenues. One of the main themes discovered when examining how respondents saw their professional life unfolding over the next five years is that respondents often reiterated the feelings of disillusionment and demoralization they had shared earlier in the survey, but their responses to those feelings varied. Some academic library workers responded by detaching from their current work, their colleagues, and/or the profession at large, often sharing their resigned recognition that things probably were not better elsewhere: in these cases, the grass did not seem to be greener. Other academic library workers responded to their feelings of disillusionment and demoralization by asserting their own agency in an effort to change their current situation. These different responses to similar feelings appear to be currently unexplored in

> **Library and university administrators have many responsibilities to a variety of stakeholders, including a responsibility of reciprocal care for employees.**

the literature, and future research could more closely examine academic library workers' experiences of disillusionment and the factors that lead to actions or responses of detachment or self-agency.

The results of this study also indicated that academic library workers feel confident in themselves and their contributions to the profession, and yet 60 percent often or sometimes consider leaving librarianship to pursue another career. Future research could explore the connection and intersection between these two conflicting themes, considering the factors that contribute to this desire to leave librarianship. Another emergent theme was a reported misalignment of values/ethics between library workers and

their library, institution, and / or profession. Future research could explore the personal values / ethics library workers bring to their work; the values / ethics that they perceive to be held by their libraries, organizations, or profession; as well as their responses to instances when these values / ethics become misaligned. This line of research could also explore how librarianship as a profession will navigate continued disconnects between the values and ethics it claims to uphold, when faced with internal and external structures, systems, and practices that conflict with these values / ethics.

The results of this study also demonstrated that respondents' most significant professional change over the last five years involved being assigned or taking on additional work / duties, often without stepping away from prior duties, nor with the compensation or recognition that they indicated would have been appropriate. The consistency of this experience across respondents was eye-opening, and future research could continue to examine its prevalence in academic librarianship as well as seek to understand *why* this happens. When academic library workers take on new duties but are not appropriately compensated or able to step away from prior duties, is this due to a lack of staffing, a lack of money, discrepancies in administrators' and workers' understandings of roles / duties and the necessary work and time allocations, or other unknown reasons?

Exploring and exposing the factors that contribute to this issue, which appears to be prevalent and consistent across academic libraries, could help administrators understand the experiences of their workers when their roles or duties change and illuminate the support they need to effectively adapt and thrive when these changes occur. Relatedly, it would be interesting to pursue research that focused on library administrators and their perspectives on how their library workers experienced changes to their roles / duties, and whether the support and information they as leaders provided to their employees was sufficient. This type of study would illuminate whether perceptions of professional change and library / institutional support differ between academic library workers and their administrators. If perceptual disconnects are present, future research could then explore the mechanisms and opportunities for addressing these discrepancies.

Conclusion

While this exploratory study intended to measure the effects of job changes on academic library workers' job satisfaction, the survey responses revealed a snapshot of unexpected insights into respondents' morale, identity, and professional outlook. The subset of responses discussed in this article demonstrate consistent themes of change, increasing workload, and a range of attitudes and approaches to job satisfaction. Many respondents shared their dissatisfaction with interpersonal working relationships and job tasks, as well as a challenging disconnect between their personal values and those of their employers. While intention to leave does not necessarily correlate to employee attrition, the high percentage of respondents who indicated their intention to leave their institutions (78 percent) or the profession entirely (60 percent) point to a disillusioned workforce which has the potential to impact services to users and operational capacity. Responses illustrated that while academic library workers retain a sense of self-confidence and personal agency during times of change, they also experience burnout, demoralization, and disillusionment within their organizations. This study affirms other recent research

about low morale in libraries and provides a snapshot of academic library workers' affective states during times of disruption and organizational challenges.

In addition to taking the necessary steps of addressing and ameliorating inequities of compensation and workload, libraries and library administrators must take active steps to identify and mitigate the moral misalignment many respondents identified as a key component of job dissatisfaction and a possible factor informing their intention to leave. Library and university administrators have many responsibilities to a variety of stakeholders, including a responsibility of reciprocal care for employees. It is incumbent upon library leaders to investigate and address structural and systemic problems that cause and perpetuate low morale work environments in their organizations, and to work collaboratively and empathetically with library workers to solve the institutional problems that contribute to job dissatisfaction and demoralization across the profession. The return on investment for addressing these issues is high, including higher employee satisfaction and productivity as well as a higher employee retention rate. The cost of ignoring issues of moral misalignment and lack of reciprocal care is also high, with a potential for high employee turnover, high associated recruitment and onboarding costs, as well as continued understaffing that harms workers who stay as well as library patrons and communities.

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Appendix A

Survey Instrument

Start of Block: Block 1: Informed Consent

Q1.1 Informed Consent— Survey

<u>Title of Research Study</u>: External and internal factors related to job satisfaction during and following professional changes or disruptions.

<u>Description:</u> Jylisa Kenyon and Kristin Henrich (University of Idaho) are conducting an exploratory survey to learn more about how professional changes or disruptions over the last five years (including during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic) affected librarians' job satisfaction, relationships with coworkers and supervisors, and views of their own place in the profession. This survey will lead to an increased understanding of the factors that influence employee job satisfaction and how academic libraries can more effectively support employees as they navigate changes or disruptions.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an academic library employee. All participants must be 18 years or older and reside in the United States.

<u>Procedures:</u> Your participation will involve participating in a survey that should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you may choose not to participate at any time or decline to answer any questions.

At the end of the survey, you will also have the opportunity to indicate interest in participating in a follow-up interview by sharing your name and email address.

<u>Data Confidentiality:</u> All data collected will be anonymous, meaning no one (not even the researcher) will be able to link a participant's identity with their responses. Researchers will maintain your confidentiality and privacy by not sharing the consent forms nor the individual (e.g. disaggregated) survey responses. All data, including the consent forms and survey responses, will be stored in the researchers' University of Idaho OneDrive or Qualtrics accounts, which are password protected.

<u>Benefits:</u> Although no direct benefits are expected for individual survey participants, responses will lead to an increased awareness of whether/how changes or disruptions in responsibilities, duties, tasks, etc. affect library employees as well as the ways in [which] academic libraries can more effectively support employees as they navigate these changes or disruptions. These findings could also inform additional interview research with librarians as well as survey/interview research with library administration.

<u>Risks</u>**:** All data collected will be anonymous and all demographic data will be reported in an aggregated form. If there is any reasonable possibility that the data shared could be connected back to a specific participant, such as in a direct quote from an open text box response or when aggregated demographic data is connected to specific survey question answers, the researchers will maintain confidentiality by removing the identifying information (such as from a direct quote), generalizing the sentiments shared across multiple participants with similar perspectives, aggregating the data even further (by combining demographic categories, for example), or not reporting the results in that manner.

<u>Questions</u>: Please email Jylisa Kenyon and Kristin Henrich if you have any questions about this research project. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or about what you should do in case of any harm to you, or if you want to obtain information or offer input you may call the Office of Research Assurances at (208) 885-6340 or irb@uidaho.edu.

Selecting "**Yes, I agree to participate**" and clicking "Next" will signify your consent to participate in this study and that you are at least 18 years of age.

End of Block: Block 1: Informed Consent

Start of Block: Block 2: Professional Role Changes or Disruptions in Last Five Years

Q2.1 Throughout this survey, please answer all questions as they feel true to you, even if your answers across statements/questions appear contradictory.

Page Break

Q2.2 In the **last five years**, have you experienced a **change or disruption in your responsibilities, duties, tasks, etc.** while working in academic libraries?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Page Break

Display the Following Questions if Q2.2 (If In the last five years, have you experienced a professional role change while working in academic...) = Yes

Q2.3
When answering the next twelve (12) questions, please reflect on **the most significant change or disruption** in responsibilities, duties, tasks, etc. you've experienced in the **last five (5) years**.

Was this disruption related to the **Covid-19 pandemic**?
- Yes
- No
- Partially
- Unsure
- Prefer not to answer

Q2.4 What did this **change or disruption** entail? (Select all that apply.)
- Changing how current tasks/duties were performed
- Looking at aspects of your role through a different lens or philosophy
- Starting new tasks/duties related to new initiatives
- Assuming new responsibilities
- Stopping prior tasks/duties
- Stepping away from previous responsibilities
- Taking over tasks/duties previously held by others
- Transitioning to a new role at your Library
- Other _____

Page Break

Q2.5 Whose idea was this **change or** disruption in responsibilities, duties, tasks, etc.? (Select all that apply.)
- Your supervisor's idea
- Your idea
- Other _____
- Unsure
- Prefer not to answer

Q2.6 What factor(s) **prompted** this change or disruption? (Select all that apply)
- Factors **outside** your Library
- Factors **within** your Library
- **Your own** personal or professional **needs/motivations**
- Other _____
- Unsure
- Prefer not to answer

Display the Following Question if Q2.6 (What factor(s) **prompted** this change or disruption? (Select all that apply) = Factors outside your Library, Factors within your Library, Your own personal or professional needs/motivations, Other

Q2.7 If you'd like to provide details about these factor(s), please share them in this text-box.

_____
_____

Page Break

Q2.8 Please indicate your agreement with the following statements: While this change was occurring...

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Unsure	Prefer not to answer
I had **some control** over the change or disruption that was proposed					
I received enough information to **prepare** for the change or disruption					
The information I received about the change or disruption was **timely**					
The information I received about the change or disruption was **useful**					
The information I received **adequately answered my questions** about the change or disruption					
I was able to **participate in the implementation** of the change or disruption					

Page Break

Q2.9 Continued—Please **indicate your agreement** with the following statements: While this change was occurring...

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Unsure	Prefer not to answer
I knew **exactly** what was expected of me, with regard to the change or disruption					
I felt that my tasks were **clearly defined**					
I felt confident I could talk to my supervisor about **any concerns** related to the change or disruption					
I felt confident I could talk to my supervisor about **any excitement** related to the change or disruption					
I felt **confident** that my Library wanted me to succeed					

Page Break

Q2.10 Continued—Please indicate your agreement with the following statements: While this change was occurring...

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Unsure	Prefer not to answer
I had **coworkers** who could support me in this change or disruption					
I felt **responsible** for supporting myself in this change or disruption					
I felt like I had **sufficient support** when asked to navigate this change or disruption					
I felt **excited** about the change or disruption					
I felt **stressed** about the change or disruption					

Page Break

Q2.11 Continued—Please indicate your agreement with the following statements: While this change was occurring...

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Unsure	Prefer not to answer
I felt like my supervisor **understood** how this change or disruption impacted me					
I felt like my supervisor **cared** whether this change or disruption affected me					
I experienced this change or disruption **as a loss**					
I experienced this change or disruption **as an opportunity**					
This change or disruption had an effect on my life **outside of work**					

Page Break

Q2.12 Did this change or disruption affect how you viewed...

	Yes, in a positive way	Yes, in a negative way	No	Unsure	Prefer not to answer
Yourself as a librarian					
Your supervisor					
Your coworkers					
Your library					
Your college/university/institution					
Academic librarianship as a profession					

Q2.13 Is there anything that your **coworkers, supervisor, library, or institution** could have done to better support you during and after this change or disruption? If so, please feel free to share

_____
_____

End of Block: Block 2: Professional Role Changes or Disruptions in Last Five Years

Start of Block: Block 3: Questions about Professional Role Satisfaction

Q3.1 The following six (6) questions will ask you more about your **satisfaction** with your job and with academic librarianship as a profession.

Please answer questions as they feel true to you, even if your answers across statements/questions appear contradictory. ---

Q3.2

Please indicate **how important** the following factors are to your satisfaction at work.

Please feel free to add and rate up to three (3) other factors, if applicable.

	Important	Neutral	Not Important	N/A	Prefer not to answer
My daily tasks/activities					
My personal identity					
My personal values/ethics					
My professional identity					
My position in my current Library					
My cumulative experiences as an academic library worker					
My relationship with my coworkers					
My relationship with my supervisor					
Alignment between my own values/ethics and those of my library					
Alignment between my own values/ethics and those of my institution					
Belief that my library cares about me as an employee					
Belief that my institution cares about me as an employee					
Other [text box]					
Other [text box]					
Other [text box]					

Page Break

Q3.3
Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	N/A	Prefer not to answer
I believe I **have control** over the direction my career takes					
I **enjoy** being an academic librarian/library worker					
I **feel secure** in who I am as a librarian					
I believe I have a **meaningful place** in my library					

Page Break

Q3.4

Continued—Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	N/A	Prefer not to answer
The changes occurring in academic libraries **cause me stress**					
The changes occurring in academic libraries are opening up **new career opportunities** for me					
I feel **exhausted** by the amount of change I have experienced over my career					
I feel **energized** by the amount of change I have experienced over my career					

Page Break

Q3.4

Continued—Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	N/A	Prefer not to answer
My professional role now is **different than** the professional role I envisioned					
My professional role now is **better than** what I envisioned					
Academic librarianship is **leaving me behind**					
I feel **confident** I will have a place in the future of academic libraries					
I believe I can **meaningfully contribute** to the future of academic librarianship					

Page Break

Q3.6

As a result of **changes or disruptions you've experienced over the last five (5) years**, how **often** do you think about...

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	N/A	Prefer not to answer
Moving to a **different role** in your Library					
Moving to a **different institution**					
Moving to a **different subfield** of academic librarianship					
Pursuing librarianship **outside of academia**					
Pursuing **another career**					
Pursuing early retirement					

Page Break

Q3.7 How do you see your professional life unfolding over the **next five (5) years**?

_____

_____

End of Block: Block 3: Questions about Professional Role Satisfaction

Start of Block: Block 4: Demographic Questions

Q4.1 The final ten (10) questions of this survey focus on gathering demographic information.

Please select "**Prefer not to answer**" if you choose not to share this information.

--

Q4.2 Do you hold a master's degree in library and/or information studies (MLS, MILS, MLIS, etc.)?
• Yes
• Currently pursuing degree
• No
• Prefer not to answer

Q4.3 What is your current role?
• Administrator
• Tenured/tenure-track librarian
• Non-tenure track/clinical librarian
• Library staff
• Other _____
• Prefer not to answer

Page Break

Q4.4 How long have you worked in an academic library?
• Less than 4 years
• 5 to 9 years
• 10 to 14 years
• 15 to 19 years
• More than 20 years
• Prefer not to answer

Q4.5 What are you[r] primary job duties? (select all that apply)
• Administration
• Access services
• Archives and special collections
• Collection management

- Data services
- Digital humanities
- Instruction
- Reference
- Scholarly communication
- Subject liaison
- Technical services
- Other_____
- Prefer not to answer

Page Break

Q4.6 What is your gender identity?
- Please share in the following box: _____
- Prefer not to answer

Q4.7 What is your racial or ethnic identity?
- Please share in the following text box: _____
- Prefer not to answer

Q4.8 What is your age?
- 18–25
- 26–35
- 36–45
- 46–55
- 56–65
- 66–75
- 75 +
- Prefer not to answer

Page Break

Q4.9 What type of higher education institution do you currently work at?
- Associate's/Community College
- Baccalaureate College
- Master's College/University
- Doctoral College/University
- Other_____
- Prefer not to answer

Q4.10 What is the approximate total enrollment at your higher education institution?
- Less than 5000
- 5001 to 10000
- 10001 to 15000
- 15001 to 20000

- 20001 to 25000
- More than 25001
- Other_____
- Prefer not to answer

Q4.11 Where is your higher education institution located?
- Northeastern United States
- Midwestern United States
- Southern United States
- Western United States
- Other_____
- Prefer not to answer

End of Block: Block 4: Demographic Questions

Appendix B
Counts of Thematic Codes

Theme	Question 2.13 (n = 131)	Question 3.7 (n = 183)
Adapting—stay in current environment but adapt to library or profession's changes	3	67
Budget cuts	9	4
Changes to service models	7	6
Contributing to the future of the discipline	0	17
Compassion or empathy for others	11	4
Covid-19	38	8
DEI	1	2
Disengagement—minimize emotional investment, perform tasks/job as required (active choice)	0	7
Expanding expertise/knowledge	3	41
Grass isn't greener (feeling resigned that things probably aren't better elsewhere, frustration with profession, disillusionment with field)	3	33
Gratitude for coworkers/supervisor (mutual aid/solidarity)	15	1
Insufficient communication/information/collaboration/preparation	67	1
Isolation, alienation, loss of support	24	8
Job/responsibility changes	39	17
Lack of agency (expressed)	24	23
Lack of care/empathy	53	9
Lack of compensation (tangible: underpaid, or new roles with no raise/job title)	7	10
Lack of recognition (abstract: feeling of work/effort being invisible to others)	36	6
Lack of staffing	22	6
Lack of trust for others (the Library/University/coworkers/supervisor)	31	11
Leaving	1	76
Library (or organizational culture) friction/changes	53	10

Maintaining—no stated plan, just maintaining/sustaining current environment—hanging on	0	37
Mental health (peace, work-life balance, stress, anxiety, etc.)	22	30
Mistrusted by others (expressed)	7	2
Moral injury/unfairness	32	14
Not valued (librarianship as a profession)	16	10
Not valued (personally)	11	8
Personal life	1	18
Pivot to online	9	2
Promotion/advancement denied (non-existent)	1	8
Promotion/advancement seeking	0	33
Self-empowered/personal initiative	9	99
Spatial changes (to building, to work location, etc.)	16	6
Thriving— excited about current environment, changes, vision for future	0	33
Uncertainty about future	1	59
University directives (potentially causing friction/change)	23	3
Unsupportive colleagues/supervisor	63	12
Unsupportive institution (outside the Library)	25	6
Workload	37	8

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