Legally Satisfied: A Survey of Law Library Workers and Job Satisfaction

Nicole Eva and Nancy McCormack

Abstract: The authors surveyed law library workers across Canada in an attempt to discover whether they were satisfied with their jobs, and to compare these findings to previous surveys of those working in other types of libraries. Findings indicated that while law library workers are generally quite satisfied with their work, issues were discovered including salary, stress, and opportunities for advancement.

Introduction

How satisfied are law library workers in their jobs? This question has been raised by a number of those in the profession, so in 2008, the Canadian Association of Law Libraries sponsored research to determine the satisfaction levels of Law Library workers in this country.[1] Until now, not much had existed on the question of law library workers' job satisfaction, and what little did exist had measured satisfaction in law libraries outside of Canada. In this present survey, we focus solely on job satisfaction among Canadian law library workers – both librarian and non-librarian. A version of our findings will be made available specifically to the Canadian law library community,[2] but we felt the results might also be illuminating to the library community in general—hence this paper.

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[2] Selected results will be published in the *Canadian Law Library Review* in 2009.

Law libraries are quite different from many other types of libraries, and those who work in them might be employed by a wide variety of institutions, including universities, government libraries, courthouses, private law firms, prisons, law associations and private companies. The work itself is also quite specialized but the backgrounds of those working in law libraries may range from very little post-secondary education to multiple master's degrees and even law degrees. Regardless of background, unique training is necessary to understand the intricacies of law library work. In addition, patrons also may range from students to members of the general public, to lawyers and law professors, each adding different dimensions to the work that is done in the library.

Bearing all this in mind, we wondered if law library workers in Canada were any more or less satisfied than those who worked in other types of libraries. We also wondered if the sources of job satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) would be similar to those already well-documented in other types of libraries – mainly issues regarding salary, staffing, and budgets. We assumed that for the most part, law library workers would be mainly satisfied with their jobs, but wondered if their niche knowledge and the specialized nature of their jobs would have any detectable influence on their being more or less satisfied than those working in other types of libraries. We also wondered if the satisfaction levels would differ among those working in different types of law library settings, and whether the ages of workers would be an important factor.

Literature Review

As mentioned above, many surveys have been done on library job satisfaction, but very few have been concerned with law libraries in particular. The American publication, *Library Journal*, released the results of three job satisfaction surveys: in 1994 (St. Lifer, "Are You Happy in Your Job: LJ's Exclusive Report"), 1999 (Gordon & Nesbeitt, "Who We Are, Where We're Going: A Report from the Front"), and again in 2007 (Berry, "Great Work, Genuine Problems"). All of these indicated that while librarians saw their work as important and necessary, they also had severe misgivings about salaries, about the perception of their work by the public, and about incompetent or inflexible management. Librarians of all types participated in these studies, including those employed in public, academic, school, government, and business libraries. Overall, library workers seemed fairly satisfied with their work. But as always, there was much that could be improved upon. A follow-up article from the last *Library Journal* survey (Albanese, 2008) focused on academic librarians and again showed a strong relationship between salary and job satisfaction. Other concerns included status compared to faculty, opportunities for advancement, and workload.

Similar surveys of one sort or another have appeared sporadically over the decades in various countries. One of the most recent (Topper, 2008) found similar results to earlier studies of U.S. librarian job satisfaction and concluded that, on the whole, librarians are very satisfied. Areas of dissatisfaction in the findings included salaries, funding, and management. Bonnie Jean Loyd Glasgow published a thesis based on her extensive study of job satisfaction among academic librarians in the U.S. She found that "…the most important predictor of job satisfaction among the academic librarians surveyed was

librarians' perception of their work" (Glasgow, 1982, 121). The implication here was that librarians have found a lot of intrinsic satisfaction from their work if they believe it is meaningful and appreciated. Other important factors included perceived opportunities for promotion, position held in the library, and, of course, salary (Glasgow, 1982).

Another study of job satisfaction among U.S. academic librarians (Mirfakhrai, 1991) revealed that overall, these librarians were satisfied with their jobs; the size of library (the smaller, the better) and positive relationships with co-workers were seen as the biggest indicators of satisfaction in this survey. Supervision and promotion were both factors which contributed to dissatisfaction when negative.

A survey done in 1998 of American librarians (van Reenen, 1998) showed older and more experienced librarians to be more satisfied with their jobs than more recent entrants to the field. Those with library science degrees were more satisfied than those without. Van Reenen's most notable finding was that those who worked directly with patrons, especially reference librarians, were the most satisfied; also high on the scale were department heads. Again it is interesting to note that while some studies cite patrons as a source of stress, others cite them as a source of satisfaction. On the whole, Van Reenen too found that library workers were fairly satisfied with their jobs. Yet when compared to a cross-workplace study, librarians came out with slightly lower satisfaction scores than the average American worker.

One of the few Canadian studies was done by Gloria Leckie and Jim Brett in 1997. They replicated an earlier U.S. study (Horenstein, 1993) to attempt an accurate comparison of results between the two countries. Horenstein's study explored the correlations between

job satisfaction and faculty status. Leckie and Brett found that as a whole, Canadian academic librarians are quite satisfied with their jobs, although concerns were expressed regarding workload and salary. They also found that librarians who performed largely administrative tasks were more satisfied than those who dealt more with the day-to-day functions of the library, and that this has more of an effect on job satisfaction than faculty status. At first this would seem at odds with Glasgow's report that meaningful work is the path to satisfaction. These administrative librarians, however, appeared to be more satisfied because felt that they were involved with significant decisions regarding the library and the planning process. In other words, meaningful work may take many forms, but the bottom line is that workers must believe that the work they are doing is useful and valuable.

A 2003 survey conducted by Donna M. Millard also focused on Canadian academic librarians. Millard, like others, found that academic librarians on the whole enjoyed their work and tended to stay in their jobs for long periods of time. But poor management and leadership contributed to major unhappiness for this group. Millard found that personal factors, such as salary and location, had less of an impact on satisfaction than did organizational factors.

Eino Sierpe (1999) surveyed English-language academic librarians in Quebec. Once again, these librarians appeared to be quite satisfied overall, but had concerns about the communication and operating procedures within their institutions. Interestingly, they ranked supervision highly, which is in contrast to many other results we have seen. Pay and promotion were ranked neutrally. The work itself also ranked as a high source of these librarians' satisfaction.

The 8Rs Research Team, consisting of librarians at the University of Alberta libraries, conducted a study of human resources in Canadian libraries in 2005. Their survey included all types of libraries and found that overall job satisfaction was quite high; however, they did find that those working in special libraries reported lower levels of job satisfaction than those working in other types of libraries. The 8Rs study also discovered that, in general, older workers were more satisfied than younger workers (8Rs Research Team, 2005).

David P. Fisher (1990) analyzed past studies in an effort to discover whether librarians were prone to burnout. His results were inconclusive; he did not find that libraries were particularly stressful workplaces. On the other hand, he did feel the studies were too disparate to be accurately compared, and found the methodology of some of these earlier studies to be suspect. So while the results might indicate librarians were not particularly stressed, no reliable conclusions could be drawn. He also pointed out that stressors can be dependent on the individual library worker: e.g. that some librarians cited patrons as stressors, whilst others mentioned them as sources of satisfaction. It was noteworthy that workload and management were both mentioned as sources of stress for library workers.

As we have pointed out, very few studies have been done on those working in law libraries in particular, and none of these have focused specifically on job satisfaction. Veneese Nelson, for example, conducted a study on law librarians in the U.S. to determine if they suffered from high levels of burnout. She found that law librarians were no more likely than other types of librarians to feel stress, but that some of them do experience a great deal of stress on the job and thus are susceptible to burnout. Nelson also pointed out that any questionnaire devoted to burnout might have validity concerns,

as those most suffering from high stress and workload pressures seem least likely to take the time to complete such a survey (Nelson, 1987).

The 2004 "Generations in Law Librarianship: Results of the AALL Survey" (DiFelice et al) included some questions on job satisfaction but focused primarily on how older and newer generations in law libraries were working together. Kelly Browne (2005), in her study of the emotional intelligence of law librarians, asked several job satisfaction questions. The results were published in *Law Library Journal's* "2004-05 Completed Research Grant Project." Among the more interesting findings was that cataloguers in law librarianship reported the least amount of stress while academic law library directors reported the most.

The Canadian Association of Law Libraries and the Toronto Association of Law Libraries both conduct annual surveys on salaries. While salary is often positively correlated to job satisfaction, these surveys provide no information on other significant factors which contribute to happiness on the job, such as autonomy, patron interaction, and good relationships with superiors and co-workers, nor do they ascertain which salary level might lead to job satisfaction.

In all of the various surveys that have been conducted over the years, a pattern emerges: while on the whole librarians seem quite satisfied with their jobs, they have distinct concerns about salary, administration, funding, and workload. These concerns are ongoing and surface in the various geographies sampled.

The results of these studies may provide a useful overview of the profession as a whole. The question which this paper seeks to answer, however, is whether they have equal

validity when applied to law library workers in Canada.

The Study

As no study of the job satisfaction of law library workers had been carried out in Canada, we decided to pursue this research opportunity. We sent a survey to the membership of several Canadian law library associations of varying sizes for the specific purpose of determining the overall job satisfaction level of people who work in law libraries. The survey asked for information on library type, location, reporting structure, and years respondents have worked in law libraries. It then asked specific questions about how satisfied respondents were in terms of their autonomy/freedom, patron interactions, physical space, the nature of the work itself, salary, relationships with others in the workplace, and more.

Our hypothesis was that individuals who work in law libraries would be largely satisfied with their jobs, but anticipated some dissatisfaction in the areas of staffing, space constraints, budgets, and reporting structures. Our goal was to determine whether our initial assumptions were correct and to pinpoint the stressors in law libraries in Canada.

Methodology

Of the Canadian law library associations which were contacted to see if they were interested in participating in the study, all agreed. We determined that owing to the varying nature of job descriptions and education among those working in law libraries, survey responses would not be limited to librarians only but rather to all law library

workers. Links to the survey, created on Survey Monkey, were sent to the members of

the Canadian Association of Law Libraries (CALL), the Toronto Association of Law

Libraries (TALL), the Vancouver Association of Law Libraries (VALL), the Montreal

Association of Law Libraries (MALL), the Edmonton Law Library Association (ELLA),

the Calgary Law Library Group (CLLG), and the Winnipeg Law Library Group (WLLG).

Membership lists were cross-checked against the CALL list, and members of all

associations were asked to fill out the survey only once. Of the 849 unique survey

requests sent, we received 199 responses – a 23.4% response rate. Obviously, job

satisfaction was something that many were eager to share their opinions on.

Responses

Responses were not limited simply to the quantitative. Consequently, comments were

provided by respondents in every category possible, and many of these were

extraordinarily enlightening. They ranged from extremely positive ("I love my job at this

law firm") to disheartening ("If asked, I would recommend to any new librarian not to

pursue law librarianship…"). The wide range of these comments provided a more

personal view of the state of law library work and added an important dimension to the

quantitative analysis of the results.

Categories of Respondents

Over 50%[3] of respondents worked in private law firm libraries. The next largest

category of responses came from those working in government libraries (15.6%),

followed closely by academic (13.1%) and courthouse (12.1%) libraries. Only 4% of

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[3] 52.2%, to be exact.

respondents worked in corporate libraries, and 3% in 'other', including prisons and bar or law associations (see Figure 1).[4]

Figure 1
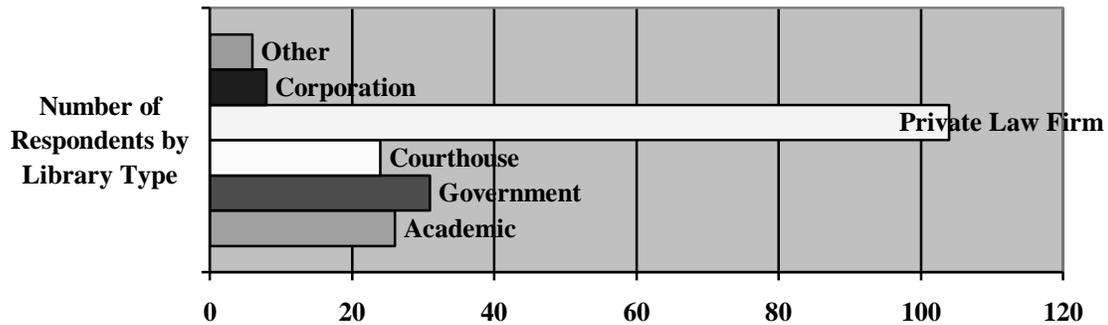
Ontario respondents made up 48.2%, followed by British Columbia and Alberta each at 14.6%, Quebec at 11.6%, 3% from both Manitoba and Nova Scotia, 2% from Saskatchewan, 1.5% from New Brunswick, 1% from Newfoundland and 0.5% from the Yukon Territories. No responses were received from the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, or Prince Edward Island (see Figure 2). This geographic distribution was what one might expect given the population of law library workers in the various jurisdictions and the association membership across the country.[5]

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[4] Given the large amount of data collected by this survey, the authors were able to reproduce only a small number of charts and tables. Those that appear here are included because they seemed most relevant to this particular paper.

[5] Indeed, in some parts of Canada, the number of law library workers is so small that some individuals expressed concern that they might be easily identified as a result. The information in this paper has been presented in such a way that no particular individuals can be identified.

Figure 2

Number of Respondents by Province/Territory
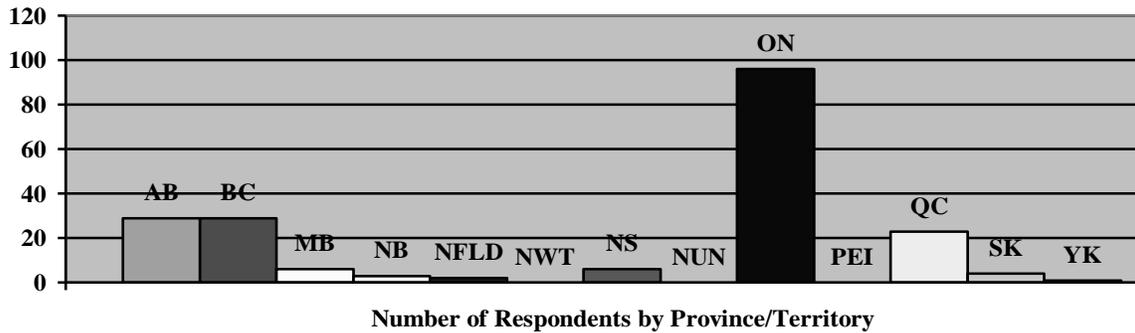
It would appear that law libraries are following the demographic trend of an aging workforce seen in all types of libraries (8Rs Research Team, 2005), with 63.9% falling between the ages of 41 and 60 years of age. Five percent are over 61, with 20.1% aged 31-40 and 11.1% under 30. The overwhelming majority (87.9%) of respondents are female, not surprising given the larger numbers of women employed in libraries generally.
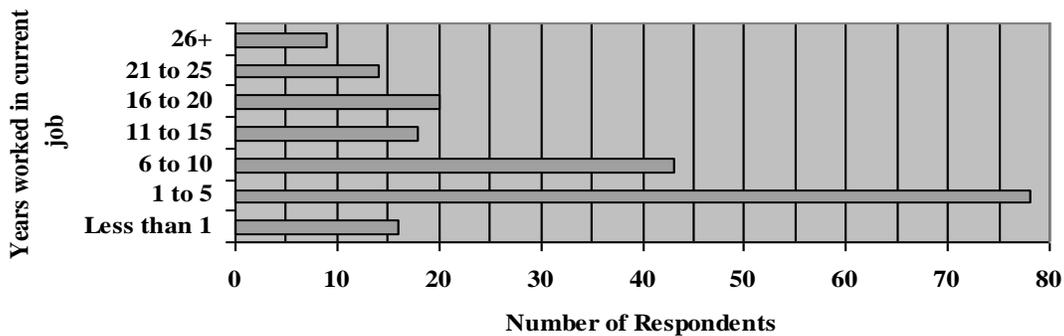
While most of the respondents (34.2%) identified their main area of work as reference, nearly the same number (31.7%) answered 'other' to this question. These responses included areas such as technical and information services, knowledge management, and research – but the vast majority who answered 'other' indicated that they actually worked in most or all areas of the library as they are either the only librarian or one of a small team in their library. Based on this question it appears that law librarians, probably because of the specialized and often smaller size of law libraries, multi-task perhaps to a greater degree than their counterparts in other types of libraries. Other answers included administration (19.6%), cataloguing (4%), circulation (3%), acquisitions (2.5%), serials

(2.5%), collections (1.5%), interlibrary loans (0.5%), and systems (0.5%). Most

respondents (83.9%) are working full time (defined as 35 or more hours per week), with

16.1% working part time.

The majority of respondents (58.3%) had Library/Information Science Master's degrees

(MLIS, MLS, MIST, etc); an additional 10.6% had LLBs or JDs, 5% had an additional

Master's degree, and 0.5% possessed a PhD. The rest of the respondents indicated that

they had high school, college, technical school, or undergraduate degrees.

The range of time at the respondents' current jobs varied from one month to 30 years,

with an average of 8.7 years[6] (see Figure 3). Almost twenty-two percent[7] had been in

their jobs for one year or less; 8% less than one year.

Figure 3

Years worked in current job (y-axis): 26+, 21 to 25, 16 to 20, 11 to 15, 6 to 10, 1 to 5, Less than 1. Number of Respondents (x-axis): 0 to 80.

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[6] For the purposes of arriving at this average, those who indicated 'less than one year' were given a value of 0.5, unless the exact number of months was given, in which case the appropriate percentage was applied. A range of 20-24 years was given a value of 22.
[7] The exact figure was 21.6%.

Nearly one third of respondents[8] had worked in law libraries for as long as they had worked in libraries generally. One respondent who had worked in libraries generally for the longest time bears mentioning – 42 years!

While the majority (38.2%) of respondents reported to a Head Librarian, the rest of the answers varied widely. Fifteen percent[9] reported to an upper level (non-lawyer) manager; 13.6% to a lawyer, 8% to another librarian, 4.5% to a CEO, 4% to a Dean or University Librarian (2% each), 3.5% to a mid-level (non-lawyer) manager; and 13.1% to 'other' – which consisted of a variety of boards, committees, and chief executives of several kinds. This variety in reporting structures is due, in part, to the wide variety of types of law libraries – courthouse, corporate, private law firms, and academic. It is also due, in part, to the jobs held by respondents, ranging from technicians to law library heads and part-time professors of law.

Finally, the overwhelming majority (58.8%) of respondents reported the size of their libraries to be small – defined as being under 50,000 volumes. Seventeen percent[10] are at medium-size libraries (50,000 – 100,000 volumes) and 17.6% with over 100,000 volumes.[11]

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[8] 31.7% to be exact.
[9] 15.1% to be exact.
[10] 17.1% to be exact.
[11] 6.5% were unsure of the size of their library.

So… Are They Satisfied?

The short answer seems to be… yes. Eighty-eight percent[12] of respondents said 'yes' to

the yes-or-no question of "Do you feel that, overall, you are satisfied with your job?"

While this might appear relatively uniform, an interesting variant was noted in the

responses based on age and experience: 100% of workers over 61 answered 'yes' to the

question of 'overall, you are satisfied with your job?'. Indeed, older workers were

generally more satisfied than their younger counterparts, with 90.6% answering 'yes' in

the 51-60 age group, 85.7% in the 41-50 group, 90% in the 31-40 group, and 77.3% in

the under-30 group. This mirrors the 8Rs study of Canadian libraries (8Rs Research

Team, 2005), as well as van Reenen's study of American librarians (van Reenen, 1998),

both of which found that those librarians most satisfied with their jobs were in the later

years of their careers.

When asked to rank *all* the components which make their work the *most* satisfying,

72.4% of all respondents ranked 'challenge/work itself' highest; when forced to choose

the *one* most satisfying aspect, 38.2% chose this element, still making it the highest

ranked source of satisfaction (see Table 1). The second most popular option was the

'autonomy/freedom' of the job, followed at some distance by 'patron interaction,'

'relationships with co-workers,' and 'salary.' It is evident that while salary is ranked as

somewhat satisfactory, it is definitely not the reason most are satisfied with their jobs in

law libraries.

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[12] 87.9% to be exact.

Table 1

Sources of Job Satisfaction	What would you say are the MOST satisfying aspects of your job (choose all that apply) Response Percent	Of these, which is the ONE most satisfying aspect of your job? Response Percent
Challenge/work itself	72.4%	38.2%
Autonomy/freedom	71.4%	23.1%
Relationships with co-workers	53.8%	10.1%
Patron interaction	57.3%	15.6%
Salary	47.7%	4.0%
Relationship(s) with superiors	47.2%	2.5%
Physical environment (i.e., office, library space)	46.2%	1.5%
Geographic location	37.2%	2.0%
Other	6.0%	3.0%

The sixth choice overall was 'relationships with superior(s),' followed by the physical environment (such as office, library space, etc) at number seven. Number eight was 'geographic location,' and "Other" as a choice, came in last. These reasons which respondents provided under "Other" included such items as benefits, flexibility, continued learning, teaching, and being part of the greater university or law library communities. It appears that the work itself, both in terms of its intrinsic value and the autonomy/freedom it provides, is the greatest element of satisfaction for law library workers.

On the flip side, the numbers are more or less inverted when workers are asked to discuss sources of job dissatisfaction. So, for example, while most might be satisfied with the work itself, the most dissatisfying elements overall, by a fairly wide margin, are physical environment and salary.

When ranking *all* dissatisfying aspects of their work, 39.2% of respondents chose the 'physical environment' as number one (compared with 21.1% who choose it when asked to pick *the ONE* least satisfying element) (see Table 2).[13] At number two amongst all dissatisfying elements was salary at 34.2% (compared with 22.6% who choose it when asked to pick *the ONE* least satisfying element).

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[13] Interestingly, when respondents were asked about their the physical environment, the results were quite different depending on library type. For example, 92.3% of private law firm workers found their workplace environment to be the most pleasant. This would correlate with the assumption that most law firms have money and thus provide their employees with comfortable and up-to-date facilities. Contrast this with only 23.1% of academic library workers reporting satisfaction with their workplace environment.

Table 2

Sources of Job Dissatisfaction	What would you say are the LEAST satisfying aspects of your job (choose all that apply) Response Percent	Of these, which is the ONE least satisfying aspect of your job? Response Percent
Physical environment (i.e., office, library space)	39.2%	21.1%
Salary	34.2%	22.6%
Other	21.6%	18.6%
Challenge/work itself	18.1%	8.5%
Geographic location	16.6%	8.0%
Relationship(s) with superiors	15.6%	10.1%
Relationships with co-workers	13.6%	5.0%
Patron interaction	11.6%	3.5%
Autonomy/freedom	10.1%	2.5%

Third on both charts was 'other'. These answers mainly dealt with workload and

budgeting issues, as well as elements of the job which were repetitive or administrative in

nature.

The fourth least-satisfying aspect of the job, when ranked amongst other choices, was the

'challenge/work itself' followed by 'geographic location,' 'relationships with

superior(s),' and 'relationships with co-workers.' Patron interaction ranked eighth

indicating that patrons are more of a source of satisfaction than dissatisfaction for those

working in law libraries. Autonomy/freedom was ranked as the least dissatisfying

element of library work.

Staff and Acquisition Budgets

Staffing and budgets were two of the areas which we hypothesized might be the source of major dissatisfaction among law library workers. However, when asked if they felt whether their library was adequately staffed, 55.3% answered in the affirmative, 33.7% did not answer positively, and 11.1% answered 'depends' with reasons ranging from "it depends on the time of year", to having the right number of people but wrong assignment of duties or ability, to certain areas which are understaffed.

Satisfaction with staffing levels also differed greatly depending on the type of library in which the respondent worked. Academic and corporate library personnel were the most likely to feel that they did not have enough people working in their library (Table 3).

Table 3

Library Type	Do you feel that your library is adequately staffed? Response Percent		
	Yes	No	Depends
Academic	26.9%	46.2%	26.9%
Corporate	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%
Courthouse	70.8%	20.8%	8.3%
Government	48.4%	35.5%	16.1%
Private Law Firm	62.5%	29.8%	7.7%

In terms of acquisitions budget, 66.3% felt they were adequately resourced; 26.1% felt they were under-resourced. Of the 7.5% who answered 'depends', many felt that while they had enough money right now, the future was looking uncertain; others felt that while budgets were tight, they were doing well for what they had and the size of library. Several expressed concerns for future resources based on the rise in both cost and popularity of online resources.

Salary

Salary was another area we presumed would be a major cause of dissatisfaction among library workers. Interestingly enough, salary ranked highest as the *one* least satisfying aspect of their jobs, yet when asked directly if they felt they were adequately compensated for their jobs, 58.3% of respondents answered 'yes'. As for the rest, 30.2% said that they were not adequately compensated, and the 11.6% who answered 'depends' expressed relatively mildly-worded concerns about the lack of yearly increases, the fact that sometimes the hours worked or years of experience weren't reflected in the wages earned, or lack of hours available.

When the results are examined by library type, of those employed by private law firms for example, 44.2% expressed dissatisfaction or at least some reservations about their level of compensation.[14] Forty-five percent of government law library workers said they were not adequately compensated[15] and a striking 75% of corporate law library workers,

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[14] Slightly over half (55.8%) were satisfied; 28.8% said they were not adequately compensated and 15.4% said it depended on the circumstances.
[15] 41.9% said they were adequately compensated, 45.2% said they were not adequately compensated and 12.9% said it depended on the circumstances.

felt they were not paid enough.[16] In contrast, 88.5% of academic law library workers

and 66.7% of courthouse law library workers felt they were paid fairly.[17]

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction with respect to salary also varied by age group. Those

under 30, for example, were the least satisfied with their salaries, with 50% choosing it as

one of the least satisfying elements. In contrast, 30% of those aged 31-40 chose it as one

of the least satisfying aspect of the job, followed by 34.9% of those aged 41-50, and

29.7% of those aged 51-60. Surprisingly, salary was more of an issue again after the age

of 61 (see Table 4).

Table 4

Age	Salary as *one* of the LEAST satisfying aspects of the job (when respondents are asked to choose all that apply) Response Percent	Salary chosen as THE ONE least satisfying aspect of the job. Response Percent
Under 30	50.0%	45.5%
31-40	30.0%	17.5%
41-50	34.9%	20.6%
51-60	29.7%	18.8%
61 and over	40.0%	30.0%

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[16] 25.0% felt they were adequately compensated.
[17] Academic law library workers: 7.7% said they were not adequately compensated and 3.8% said it depended on the circumstances. Courthouse library workers: 25.0% said they were not adequately compensated and 8.3% said it depended on the circumstances.

Workload

On the matter of workload, 66.8% of all respondents felt theirs was fair, while 20.1%

thought theirs was unfair, and 13.1% answered 'depends'. Those who added

explanations of this last choice noted the problem of understaffing, uneven workflow

throughout the yearly cycle, and the difficulty of juggling multiple roles.

Issues of workload varied considerably when examined by library type. In response to

the question, "My workload is manageable," government law library workers were the

most likely to strongly agree *and* strongly disagree, while 19.2% of academic law library

workers and 17% of courthouse library personnel disagreed in some way. The relatively

large numbers of workers who agreed somewhat also indicate that workload issues are

significant in a number of these libraries (see Table 5).

Table 5

Library Type	My workload is manageable. Response Percent					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Academic	7.7%	34.6%	38.5%	19.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Corporate	0.0%	25.0%	62.5%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Courthouse	12.5%	37.5%	33.3%	12.5%	0.0%	4.2%
Government	19.4%	38.7%	22.6%	3.2%	0.0%	16.1%
Private Law Firm	11.5%	51.0%	20.2%	13.5%	2.9%	1.0%

In a related question having to do with workload, workers in corporate law libraries were least likely to report that they had a fair workload. Only 37.5% of these employees said they had a fair workload[18] compared with 67.3% in private law firm libraries,[19] 67.7% in government law libraries, 69.2% in academic libraries,[20] and 70.8% in courthouse libraries.[21] Not surprisingly, difficulties with workload appear severe in the private sector, given its need for profitability. But as the answers to some of the other survey questions indicate, years of cutbacks in publicly funded institutions are now also beginning to show in terms of increased workload.

More Satisfied than Not: Other Factors

Several questions on the survey required respondents to rank their overall job satisfaction with respect to the following: autonomy, communication with supervisor(s), communication with colleagues, performing meaningful work, relationships with supervisor(s), relationships with colleagues, stress/work pressure and burnout, support of supervisor(s), support of colleagues, work schedule, office/work area, overall physical condition of the library, and location of library in terms of proximity to home or other amenities. On each of these elements, the majority of respondents were in the 'satisfied' and 'strongly satisfied' categories;[22] however some of these categories merit a closer look.[23]

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[18] 50.0% said it was not fair and 12.5% said it depended on the circumstances.
[19] 19.2% said it was not fair and 13.5% said it depended on the circumstances.
[20] 15.4% said it was not fair and 15.4% said it depended on the circumstances.
[21] 16.7% said it was not fair and 12.5% said it depended on the circumstances.
[22] The choice of responses was 'strongly satisfied', 'satisfied,' 'somewhat satisfied', 'somewhat dissatisfied', 'dissatisfied', 'strongly dissatisfied', and 'not applicable.' On *autonomy*, 82.4% were either satisfied or strongly satisfied; *communication with supervisor(s):* 64.8% were either satisfied or strongly satisfied; *communication with colleagues:* 71.8% were either satisfied or strongly satisfied; *performing meaningful work:* 71.3% were either satisfied or strongly satisfied; *relationships with supervisor(s):* 66.8%

For example, fifty percent of law library workers did not feel they had opportunity for advancement if they so chose.[24] Law libraries are often run by solo librarians or are small enterprises, so this answer should not be all together surprising. Nevertheless, the extent to which law library workers do not feel they can advance in their jobs is clearly a major concern for many individuals.

a) Autonomy

When asked to rank indicators of autonomy[25] on an agreement scale ('strongly agree'; 'agree'; 'somewhat agree'; 'somewhat disagree'; 'disagree'; 'strongly disagree'; and 'not applicable'), the majority of respondents positively agreed with most statements regarding their jobs. Areas of concern, however, included the encouragement of creativity/innovation in the workplace; to this question,[26] more respondents answered 'somewhat agree' than any other answer.[27]

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were either satisfied or strongly satisfied; *relationships with colleagues:* 73.8% were either satisfied or strongly satisfied; *stress/work pressure & burnout:* 44.7% were either satisfied or strongly satisfied; *support of supervisor(s):* 60.3% were either satisfied or strongly satisfied; *support of colleagues:* 68.3% were either satisfied or strongly satisfied; *work schedule:* 73.8% were either satisfied or strongly satisfied; *your office/work area:* 56.8% were either satisfied or strongly satisfied; *physical condition of your library:* 54.8% were either satisfied or strongly satisfied; *location of library (ie close to home or other amenities):* 71.9% were either satisfied or strongly satisfied.

[23] In the categories set out immediately above, for example, only slightly more than half of respondents were satisfied or strongly satisfied with the physical condition of their office or their library.

[24] 5.5% strongly agreed, 12.6% agreed, 20.6% somewhat agreed, 23.6% somewhat disagreed, 13.1% disagreed, and 14.1% strongly disagreed with this statement; 10.6% said the question was not applicable.

[25] These include the ability to make independent decisions, to choose how to perform one's work, to think for oneself and to be encouraged to offer opinions and advice.

[26] "My job encourages creativity/innovation."

[27] 12.6% strongly agreed, 33.7% agreed, 35.7% somewhat agreed, 9.5% somewhat disagreed, 4.5% disagreed, and 3.5% strongly disagreed with this statement; 0.5% said it was not applicable.

The question with which the fewest respondents disagreed was 'I choose how to perform my work.'[28] This is a statement which goes to the root of workplace autonomy, and job autonomy has often been cited as one of the most important indicators of job satisfaction (see Roelen, Koopmans, & Groothoff, 2008; Cohrs, Abele, & Dette, 2006; Yoon & Thye, 2002). In addition, close to seventy percent[29] of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed they'd been 'encouraged to think for myself and offer my opinions and advice' on the job (an additional 19.1% agreed somewhat).[30] The statement 'my position allows me to make independent decisions' was agreed or strongly agreed with by 72.8% of respondents (an additional 21.1% agreed somewhat).[31] Clearly, these responses would seem to indicate that most library workers are satisfied with this aspect of their job.

Interestingly enough, once again the significance of autonomy varied depending on age (see Table 6). Apparently, its importance develops as workers advance through their career.

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[28] 35.2% strongly agreed, 44.7% agreed, 16.1% somewhat agreed, 3.0% somewhat disagreed, 1.0% disagreed, and 0.0% strongly disagreed with this statement.
[29] The exact figure was 68.3%.
[30] 7.5% somewhat disagreed, 1.5% disagreed, and 3.5% strongly disagreed with this statement.
[31] 2.5% somewhat disagreed, 3.0% disagreed, and 0.5% strongly disagreed with this statement.

Table 6

Age	Autonomy as *one* of the MOST satisfying aspects of the job (when respondents are asked to choose all that apply) Response Percent	Autonomy chosen as THE ONE most satisfying aspect of the job. Response Percent
Under 30	68.2%	13.6%
31-40	60.0%	15.0%
41-50	66.7%	27.0%
51-60	81.3%	28.1%
61 and over	90.0%	20.0%

Autonomy as a source of satisfaction also varied widely depending on the type of library.
For example, 25.0% of both corporate and courthouse library workers, along with 30.8%
of private law firm library workers chose it as the one most satisfying aspect of their jobs
compared with 7.7% of academic library workers and 6.5% of government library
workers. Perhaps the idea of autonomy is valued more highly in the private sector where
it is less likely to be granted.

b) Stress

Stress is certainly seen as a problem, but the responses are varied. For example, only
35.1% agreed or strongly agreed that, 'I have enough hours in the day to get everything
done'[32] and only 30.6% agreed or strongly agreed that, 'My work environment reduces

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[32] 8.0% strongly agreed, 27.1% agreed, 30.7% somewhat agreed, 15.1% somewhat disagreed, 10.6%
disagreed, and 8.5% strongly disagreed with this statement.

my stress level.'[33] Budget issues are considered a source of stress for 35.6% of respondents,[34] staffing levels for 38.8% of respondents,[35] and bureaucratic constraints for 64.4% of respondents.[36] Forty-one percent agreed that, "'I feel physically exhausted at the end of my workday."[37]

Approximately thirty percent of respondents that, 'I feel stressed because my job requires me to learn many new things on an ongoing basis.' [38] However, a similar statement, 'I enjoy the fact that my job requires me to learn many new things on an ongoing basis' was 'agreed' with by 90.4% of workers.[39] So, while library jobs may require ongoing learning, this element appears to be welcomed, rather than considered a source of dissatisfaction.

Respondents, for the most part, did not list patron interaction as a negative experience or as a form of stress. Questions about satisfactory interaction with patrons scored highly; 89% reported that patron interaction was a "rewarding aspect of my job."[40]

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[33] 4.0% strongly agreed, 26.6% agreed, 37.7% somewhat agreed, 18.1% somewhat disagreed, 6.5% disagreed, and 5.0% strongly disagreed with this statement; 2.0% said it was not applicable.
[34] *Budget issues are a high source of stress for me*: 7.0% strongly agreed, 8.5% agreed, 20.1% somewhat agreed, 18.1% somewhat disagreed, 26.1% disagreed, and 13.1% strongly disagreed with this statement; 7.0% said it was not applicable.
[35] *Staffing levels are appropriate*: 5.5% strongly agreed, 36.7% agreed, 17.1% somewhat agreed, 18.1% somewhat disagreed, 10.6% disagreed, and 10.1% strongly disagreed with this statement; 2.0% said it was not applicable.
[36] *I encounter bureaucratic constraints at work*: 13.6% strongly agreed, 17.1% agreed, 33.7% somewhat agreed, 20.1% somewhat disagreed, 11.6% disagreed, and 2.5% strongly disagreed with this statement; 1.5% said it was not applicable.
[37] 3.5% strongly agreed, 11.6% agreed, 26.1% somewhat agreed, 24.6% somewhat disagreed, 24.6% disagreed, and 8.5% strongly disagreed with this statement; 1.0% said it was not applicable.
[38] 2.0% strongly agreed, 10.1% agreed, 19.1% somewhat agreed, 26.1% somewhat disagreed, 27.1% disagreed, and 15.1% strongly disagreed with this statement; 0.5% said the question was not applicable.
[39] 25.1% strongly agreed, 44.7% agreed, 20.6% somewhat agreed, 6.0% somewhat disagreed, 2.0% disagreed, and 0.5% strongly disagreed with this statement; 1.0% said it was not applicable.
[40] 32.7% strongly agreed, 43.7% agreed, 12.6% somewhat agreed, 4.5% somewhat disagreed, 1.0% disagreed, and 1.0% strongly disagreed with this statement; 4.5% said it was not applicable.

On average, one in three workers does feel some kind of stress in the workplace, but varies according to the type of library. Those in private law libraries, for instance, were most likely to voice concerns about the amount of pressure in their jobs; 38.5% of respondents from such libraries agreed or strongly agreed that the job involved a "high degree of pressure" compared with 25% of corporate library workers or 26.9% of academic library workers (see Table 7).

Table 7

My position involves a high degree of pressure.					
Answer Options					
Library Type	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Academic	0.0%	26.9%	**42.3%**	26.9%	3.8%	0.0%
Corporate	0.0%	25.0%	**37.5%**	25.0%	12.5%	0.0%
Courthouse	16.7%	12.5%	25.0%	**41.7%**	4.2%	0.0%
Government	12.9%	22.6%	**35.5%**	16.1%	6.5%	6.5%
Private	12.5%	26.0%	**37.5%**	16.3%	6.7	1.0%

Respondents from all types of libraries, however, indicated difficulties of one sort or another with time pressures and other stresses on the job.

c) Meaningful work

Some of our survey questions focused on meaningful work, asking respondents to rank once again a number of statements on this topic. Fairly consistently, law library workers

'agreed' with all of the statements having to do with the notion that one's work was meaningful, including the most direct statement, "I feel that my job is meaningful," to which 92.4% of respondents agreed.[41]

The responses to some statements, however, were not quite as consistent. For example, 25.1% disagreed in some way with the statement, "I receive feedback that my work contributes to the institution's overall success."[42] This response might indicate that staff communication and appreciation policies and programmes are not working in the way that most institutions would expect, given that one in four workers reports the lack of such feedback.

d) Support/Relationships in the Workplace

Research has shown that positive workplace relationships are an important predictor of job satisfaction (see Haley-Lock, 2007; Ducharme & Martin, 2000). Overall, support/relationships in the workplace were also ranked positively. Ranked highest was the statement 'I value the relationships I develop with my patrons', with 56.8% agreeing and 29.1% strongly agreeing (an additional 8.5% somewhat agreed, accounting for 94.4% of responses). Following closely behind was 'My co-workers are friendly'[43] and 'I am an accepted member of the workgroup.'[44]

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[41] 27.1% strongly agreed, 42.7% agreed, 22.6% somewhat agreed, 3.5% somewhat disagreed, 2.0% disagreed, and 2.0% strongly disagreed with this statement.
[42] 14.1% strongly agreed, 32.7% agreed, 28.1% somewhat agreed, 14.6% somewhat disagreed, 5.0% disagreed, and 5.5% strongly disagreed with this statement.
[43] 26.1% strongly agreed and 48.7% agreed.
[44] 26.6% strongly agreed and 52.8% agreed.

"The perfect job for me"

Perhaps more revealing than the bare numbers the survey elicited were the comments provided by respondents. While quantitative data provides a useful picture of the level of job satisfaction in law libraries, analyzing the numbers is made more complex given the characteristics of individuals or of the specific type of workplace. As one respondent replied, "I don't think it's the job. I think I'm the problem."

What follows is a selection of noteworthy comments by individuals who expressed their views on the job:

From the satisfied…

"I like working with the other librarians. I like working with students. From time to time I get to work on interesting projects. I like being involved in the wider university community. I feel I am compensated well."

"I am one of the lucky ones. Started out in Public Libraries, then College Libraries and Medical Libraries. Finally found Law Libraries. The perfect job for me."

"My clientele are everything. They provide challenging questions and always express amazement and appreciation when I present them with the answer(s) to their questions."

"Our firm provides weekly food treats to staff. Staff are given gift cards for birthdays and fun trivia quizzes. Staff are given a financial Christmas bonus, an annual bonus and monthly TGIF parties with wonderful food and liquor drinks. The benefit package is very good as well. Staff feel appreciated and valued. I love my job at this law firm."

"I have very little dissatisfaction with my job. I am very lucky to work for a law firm that provides alternative work opportunities."

"...the people I help really appreciate my efforts and say thank you."

"The patrons and reference work are the best part of my work life."

… to the unsatisfied:

"My salary is unsatisfactory. My career growth is unacceptable. My area of specialization (legal librarianship) has created serious limitations in furthering my career. My respect and trust in my manager has eroded. If asked, I would recommend to any new librarian NOT to pursue Law Librarianship and NOT to specialize in Reference."

"I miss the patrons."

"Lawyers never seem to appreciate libraries as an essential tool that allows them to do their job – we just don't get the respect we deserve."

"Lawyers and students are very difficult persons to work with, and the stress levels and responsibilities of the job are huge."

"Supervisor is fine... Head of library is not. Worst 'communicator' and manager I've ever had the displeasure of meeting."

"I feel law librarians are under-paid and under-valued."

Would You Do it all Again?

Arguably, one of the most meaningful indicators of a satisfied worker ought to be the response to the question: "If you could do it all again, would you choose to work in a law library?" To this, an overwhelming 75.4% answered yes. In contrast, 11.1% would not choose this career again, and 13.6% answered that it 'depends'.

In their comments, some workers said they were unsure they would "do it all again", owing to the fact they had never had the opportunity to try other types of library jobs. Other respondents felt that they would only want to work in their current job, not in any other law library. Yet others suggested they might be happier in a different type of library. Others felt they might answer the question differently depending on the salary, benefits, and location of another position.

Conclusion

Although the comments ran the gamut from "There are no unsatisfying aspects to this job;" to "I feel law librarians are under-paid and under-valued," law library workers in Canada, for the most part, seemed quite satisfied with their jobs. Salary was a source of dissatisfaction for a number of respondents, and stress in the workplace stood out as a problem for approximately one-third of workers. Worry about budgets, and the lack of appropriate numbers of staff in the workplace were other sources of dissatisfaction. Perhaps the most surprising revelation, however, was that half of all workers feel they have little hope of advancement in their current jobs.

Even given the above, most workers indicated a great deal of satisfaction. They pointed especially to working with patrons, the challenge of the work, and the autonomy that goes with it.

This, of course, is only a preliminary survey, but it does provide a snapshot in time of the stressors and sources of satisfaction for this particular group of individuals in this very special type of library—the Law library. Also, these findings are, as the literature points out, much more widely experienced by library workers in general. In that sense, these results may be a microcosm of every kind of library. They might, in the best of all possible worlds, encourage us to tackle the problems in our own libraries, making them more satisfying places to work, confident that we are not alone.

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