

LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS: FACTS AND FIGURES

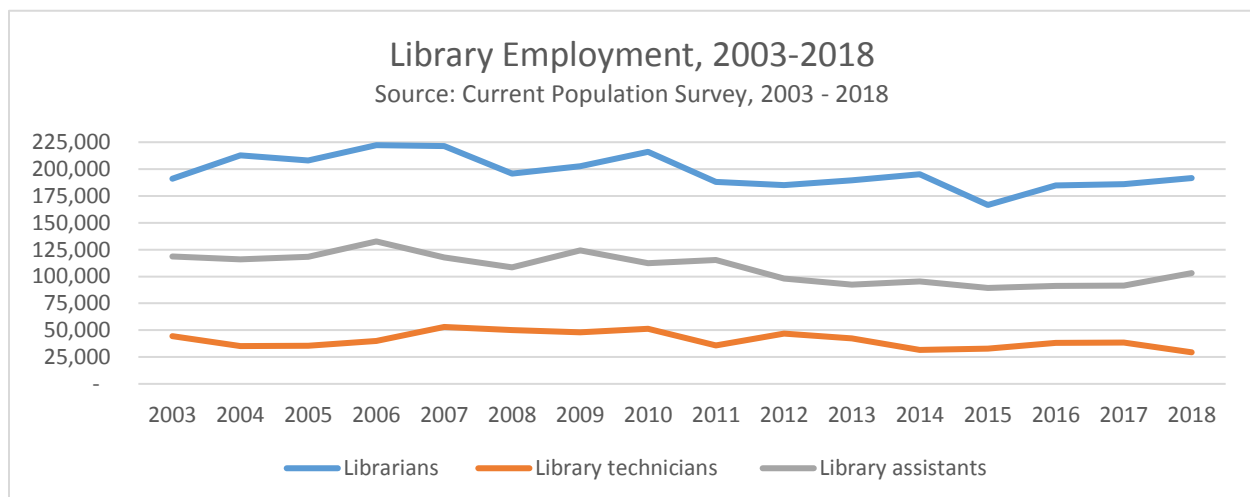
Librarians and other library professionals provide essential services for schools, universities, and communities. Americans go to libraries for free, reliable, and well-organized access to books, the Internet, and other sources of information and entertainment; assistance finding work; research and reference assistance; and programs for children, immigrants, seniors and other groups with specific needs, just to name a few.

This fact sheet explores the role of library staff in the workforce, the demographics, educational attainment and wages of librarians, as well as the benefits of union membership for librarians and other issues faced by library staff.

Library Occupations and Library Usage: By the Numbers

Library Employment

- In 2018, there were approximately 191,500 librarians, 29,400 library technicians, and 103,000 library assistants employed in public libraries, primary and secondary schools, institutions of higher education, museums and archives, as well as in libraries operated by private corporations, government agencies, religious groups and other organizations.¹
- Cumulative employment among librarians, library technicians, and library assistants has declined over time from a peak of 394,900 in 2006 to 324,400 in 2018, although total employment has risen steadily since hitting a low of 288,600 in 2015.²
- However, the employment of librarians and other library professionals in elementary and secondary schools has continued to decline even as overall library professional employment has started to rebound. In 2018, there were 58,000 library professionals working in elementary and secondary schools, down from 94,000 in 2010.³



Library Programs

- In 2016, more than 17,000 U.S. public libraries circulated 2.23 billion print and electronic materials and offered 5.19 million programs, attended by 113 million members of the public. Children's programs accounted for 55 percent of all programs offered, serving 77 million children and parents.⁴
- Electronic media, computer use and internet access are an increasing component of library materials and services, although 90 percent of total library circulation still consists of physical materials. In addition, library patrons accessed 296,000 public computers 277 million times and logged on to library-provided free wi-fi an additional 243 million times during 2016.⁵
- Libraries provide important training and educational programs for the public. Eighty-four percent of public libraries offer technology training programs, 73 percent provide programs to assist patrons with job applications and resume creation, and 59 percent offer assistance with finding and applying for health insurance.⁶
- In a 2016 Pew Research survey, 77 percent of Americans aged 16 and older believed libraries provided necessary resources. Among young people (aged 16 to 29), 84 percent believed libraries provided them with necessary resources.⁷
- In 2016, 46 percent of adults said they used a public library or bookmobile in the previous 12 months. Millennials (ages 18-35) had the highest usage rate of any generation, at 53 percent.⁸

Duties and Roles of Library Professionals

- While specific roles and responsibilities may change depending on the size and setting of libraries, librarians and other library professionals main role is to help people find information and conduct research on a variety of personal, professional, and academic subjects. Library professionals also teach classes, organize library collections, and tailor programs to a variety of audiences, including young children, students, professionals and the elderly.⁹
- Librarians are also often responsible for multiple aspects of management, including ordering books and other materials, purchasing new technology, supervising library technicians, assistants and volunteers, and managing library budgets.¹⁰
- Library technicians assist librarians in the operation of libraries, and their tasks include assisting visitors, organizing library materials and performing administrative and clerical functions. Library assistants have similar roles as library technicians, but may have fewer independent responsibilities.¹¹

Where Library Professionals Work

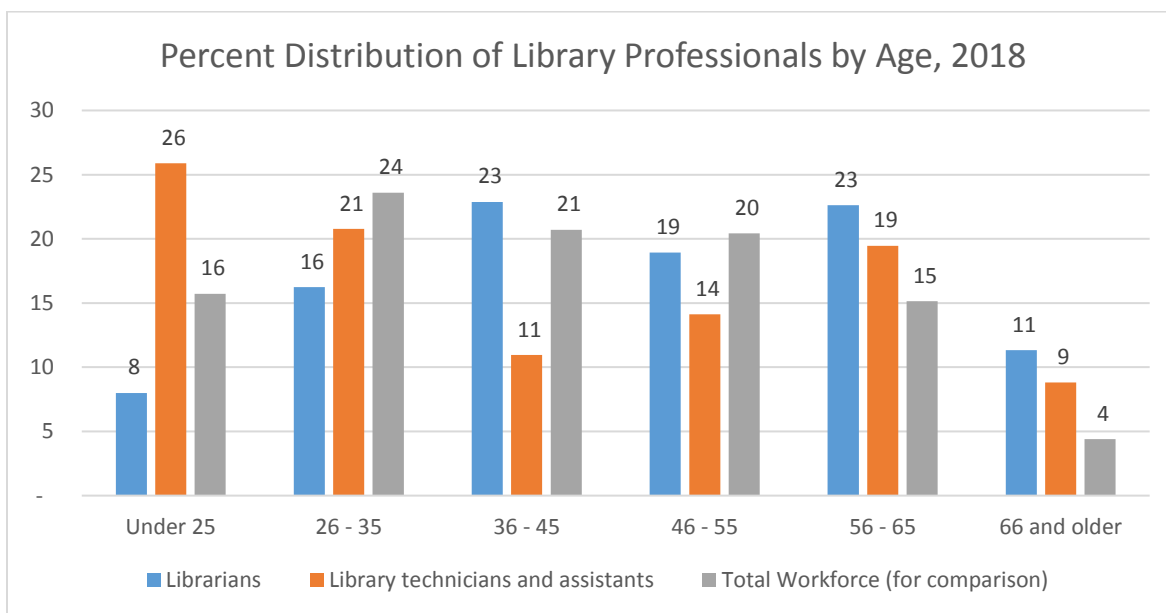
- Librarian employment is split between elementary and secondary schools (22.6 percent), public libraries (31 percent), colleges, universities and professional schools (22.1 percent), federal agencies (2 percent), and other libraries and archives, including those at businesses, law firms, nonprofit organizations and scientific organizations (21.4 percent).¹²
- Among library technicians and assistants, 44 percent are employed by public libraries, while less (26.8 percent) work at colleges and universities, 11.5 percent at elementary and secondary schools and 15.7 percent in other private and nonprofit libraries.¹³

- In 2018, 34 percent of librarians, 64 percent of library technicians, and 67 percent of library assistants worked part-time.¹⁴

Diversity and Demographics of Library Professionals

The librarian profession suffers from a persistent lack of racial and ethnic diversity that shows few signs of abating.

- Over 77 percent of librarians were White, non-Hispanic in 2018. Library technicians and assistants were only slightly more diverse. Among library technicians and assistants in 2018, 74.8 percent were White, non-Hispanic.¹⁵
- In 2018, just 6.8 percent of librarians identified as Black or African American, 8.6 percent as Hispanic or Latino, and 4.6 percent as Asian-American or Pacific Islander.¹⁶
- Librarians are less diverse than the total workforce of people in education, training, and library occupations. Black and African American professionals made up 10.6 percent of the education workforce, while Hispanic and Asian professionals represented 10.7 percent and 4.5 percent of the education workforce, respectively.¹⁷
- Librarians and other library professionals are also older than the general workforce. While 31.5 percent of the library workforce is over the age of 55, Americans over 55 only account for 19.6 percent of the total workforce.¹⁸



Education Attainment

In many settings, librarians are required to hold at least a master’s degree in library science or meet state teaching license standards for being a school librarian.¹⁹ Many other library workers, including lower paid library technicians and library assistants have high educational attainment as well.

- In 2018, 53.5 percent of librarians held a master’s degree or higher. 22.4 percent held a bachelor’s degree and 22.8 percent had an associate’s degree or completed some college coursework.²⁰

- In the same year, 14.3 percent of library technicians and assistants had a high school diploma or equivalent, 36.9 percent had an associate's degree or completed some college coursework, 37.8 percent had a bachelor's degree and 8.3 percent had a master's, professional or doctoral degree.²¹

Women and Library Professions

- In 2018, women accounted for 79 percent of all librarians, and 76.5 percent of all library technicians and assistants, which was above the average of 73.2 percent for women employed in all education and library professions.²² This represents a slightly more balanced workforce than in the past. In 1995, women were 83.9 percent of librarians, and in 2003, women were 84.4 percent of librarians.²³
- Women represented 82.6 percent of graduates in Master of Library Science (MLS) programs in 2016-2017. Black women were 4.5 percent of all MLS graduates, while Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander women accounted for 6.7 and 2.1 percent of the 2017 class, respectively.²⁴

Library Worker Earnings and the Wage Gap

In 2018, the mean annual salary for librarians was \$41,704, while the mean hourly wage for library technicians and assistants was \$13.17.²⁵ Among full-time librarians (working 35 hours a week or more), mean annual earnings were higher, at \$53,130.²⁶

Regional Variance in Salaries

Librarian earnings vary significantly from state to state. The state with the highest mean annual earnings for full-time librarians in 2017 was the District of Columbia, with mean annual earnings of \$74,575, followed by Delaware, Connecticut, Maryland, and California. The average annual mean earnings of these five states was \$69,681 in 2017. The five lowest paying states were Idaho, North Dakota, New Hampshire, Maine and Alaska, where the average annual earnings among the five states was \$26,720.²⁷ These salaries were not adjusted for differences in cost of living across states.

Institutional Variance in Compensation

Library staff compensation also varied based on the type of library employer: municipal public libraries, postsecondary institutions, or elementary and secondary schools.

Librarians employed full-time by local and state governments in standalone libraries or archives earned a mean salary of \$50,846 in 2017. Elementary and secondary school librarians (including private and parochial schools) earned a mean salary of \$47,544 and librarians in colleges, universities, and professional schools earned the highest mean annual salary of \$59,537 in 2017.²⁸

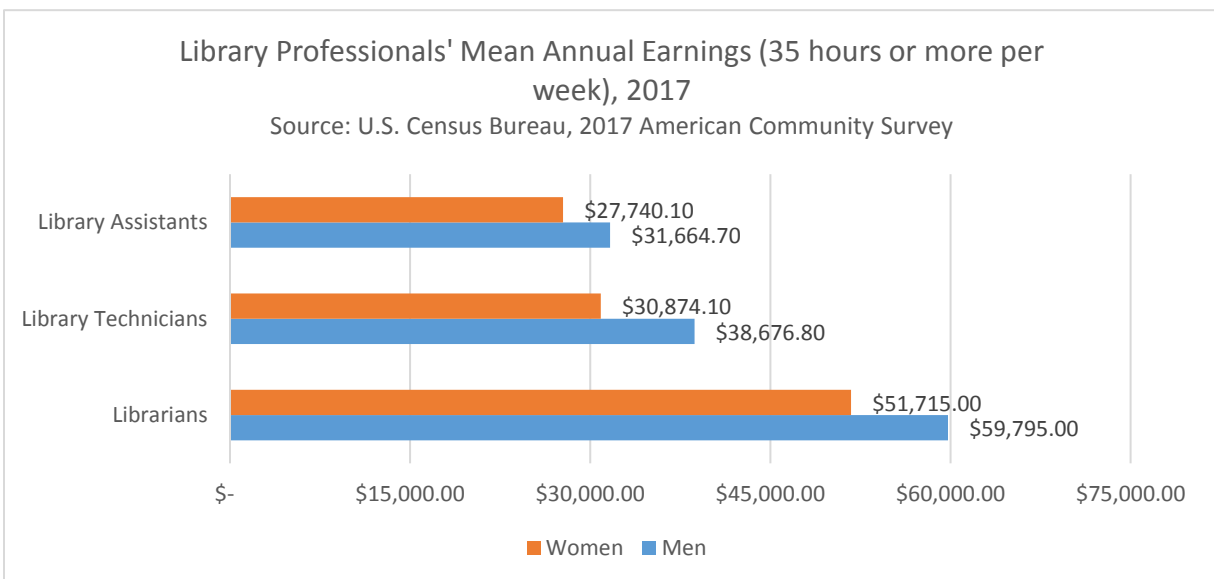
Gender Inequality

Pay inequity remains a persistent and pervasive problem in society. In 2018, median weekly earnings for women in all occupations were 81.1 percent of men's earnings.²⁹ For most women of color, the earnings gap is even larger: African American women earned just 67 cents for every dollar earned by men of all races in 2018 and Hispanic and Latina women earned just 63 cents on the dollar.³⁰ Asian women reported the highest earnings compared to men, 96 cents on the dollar, however, they earned only 76 cents to the dollar reported by Asian men.³¹

Though library occupations are predominantly held by women, a wage gap still exists in the profession:

- In 2017, women working as full-time librarians (35 hours or more per week) reported mean annual earnings of \$51,715, compared to \$59,795 for men, representing a pay gap of 86.5 percent.³²
- The pay gap persists among librarians with a master's degree or higher working full-time. These women took home mean earnings of \$58,671, 89 percent of what men in similar positions earned in 2017.³³

The American Library Association-Allied Professional Association published the 6th edition of their *Advocating for Better Salaries Toolkit* in April 2017. The toolkit includes sections on how to determine fair compensation for librarians, advocating for raises, identifying pay inequities and salary negotiation tips. Importantly, the toolkit identifies union organizing and collective bargaining as an effective means to increase librarian pay and increase equity in the workplace.³⁴



Health Benefits

In 2017, 79 percent of librarians had health insurance through a current or former employer or union, and librarians working 35 hours per week or more had a much higher coverage rate of 92.6 percent. 2.6 percent of librarians were uninsured in 2017.³⁵

- Among library technicians in 2017, just 65 percent received health insurance through a current or former employer or union. Though 76 percent of library technicians working full-time received health insurance through their employer or union, a total of 5.8% of library technicians were uninsured in 2017.³⁶

- Library assistants had coverage similar to that of library technicians. Just 66 percent had employer-provided health insurance in 2017, though the rate was higher for full-time library assistants at 81.5 percent. Six and a half percent of library assistants were uninsured in 2017 and the remainder received Medicare, Medicaid, or had some other source of health insurance.³⁷

The Union Difference

Unions are an important way for library professionals to negotiate collectively for better pay, benefits, and working conditions. Unions work to elevate library professions and secure working conditions that make it possible to provide professional service.

- In 2018, professionals working in education, training, and library occupations had the highest unionization rate for any professional occupation group, 33.8 percent.³⁸
- In 2018, 21.1 percent of librarians were union members, however, the sample size for this statistic is very small and this should not be interpreted as a significant decline from the 26.2 percent membership rate in 2017.³⁹

Wages and Benefits

Librarians and library worker union members have leveraged their collective voices to earn fair wages and stronger benefits. Wages and benefits earned by union librarians and library workers are more commensurate with the skilled and professional nature of library work.

In 2018, librarians who were union members earned 38 percent (\$284) more per week than their non-union counterparts.⁴⁰ While this statistic is also subject to volatility due to the sample size, trends in the data show that it pays to be a union librarian.

- In 2018, union library assistants earned 48 percent higher hourly wages (\$18.67) than their non-union counterparts (\$12.62).⁴¹
- Due to the small sample size, 2018 union wage data is not available for library technicians. In 2009, the last year comparative data was available, union library technicians earned 49 percent more than their non-union counterparts.⁴²

Union members are more likely than their non-union counterparts to be covered by a retirement plan, health insurance, and paid sick leave. In 2018, 95 percent of union members in the civilian workforce had access to a retirement plan, compared with only 67 percent of non-union workers. Similarly, 95 percent of union members had access to employer provided health insurance, compared to 69 percent of non-union workers in 2017. In 2017, 90 percent of union members in the civilian workforce had access to paid sick leave compared to 71 percent of non-union workers.⁴³

Union Success Stories

In January 2019, 30,000 teachers, librarians, counselors and other educational professionals went on strike in Los Angeles for six days. Prior to the strike, many schools only had part-time librarians. But as part of the United Teachers of Los Angeles, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, they negotiated for a historic collective bargaining agreement that included a six percent pay increase over the length of the contract, as well as an increase in the number of nurses, counselors, mental health professionals and librarians in schools, guaranteeing that at least one full-time librarian will be in every LA secondary school.⁴⁴

In April 2019, librarians represented by the American Federation of Teachers in the University of California system successfully ratified a new collective bargaining agreement for 2019-2024. The contract includes historic raises, totaling between 22.4 percent and 25.9 percent over a five year period. It also includes protections for librarians' academic freedom, the right to use accrued sick time for parental leave, as well as advance notice of new job responsibilities.⁴⁵

For more information on professional and technical workers, check the DPE website:
www.dpeaflcio.org.

The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE) comprises 24 national unions representing over four million people working in professional and technical occupations. DPE's affiliates represent teachers, physicians, engineers, computer scientists, psychologists, nurses, university professors, actors, technicians, and others in more than 200 professional occupations.

Source: DPE Research Department
815 16th Street, N.W., 6th Floor
Washington, DC 20006

Contact: Ethan Miller
(202) 638-0320 extension 114
emiller@dpeaflcio.org

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