

Public library work during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic: Preliminary findings of a national survey

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted and challenged not only our assumptions about work but our experience of it. Public libraries and library workers sit on the front lines of service to communities and anecdotal evidence, especially via social media during the early stages of the pandemic, were dynamic and uncensored spaces where public library workers expressed their frustrations and concerns. This poster shares initial analysis and further questions from a survey designed as part of a research project to cultivate a more structured set of evidence data from public library workers in order to better examine and understand job satisfaction among them during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic – March 2020 to September 2021.

The research will result in at least one longer article that will draw on the contributions of public librarians shared via the survey to identify both challenges and opportunities to the future of public library work and inform practice in public library workplaces. The survey was open from December 14, 2021, to January 31, 2022 during which 1228 library workers completed it. Prior to dissemination, staff of state library agencies and public library workers provided helpful input to improve the survey; both groups helped disseminate the survey.

We will also draw on the data analysis to inform pedagogies for students in LIS degree programs. We anticipate the results of our analysis to make a significant contribution to the future of library work and the public library as a workplace.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Public libraries; political economy of the information society; social justice

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Library work; library workers; COVID-19 pandemic; burnout; work-life balance.