

LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS: FACTS AND FIGURES

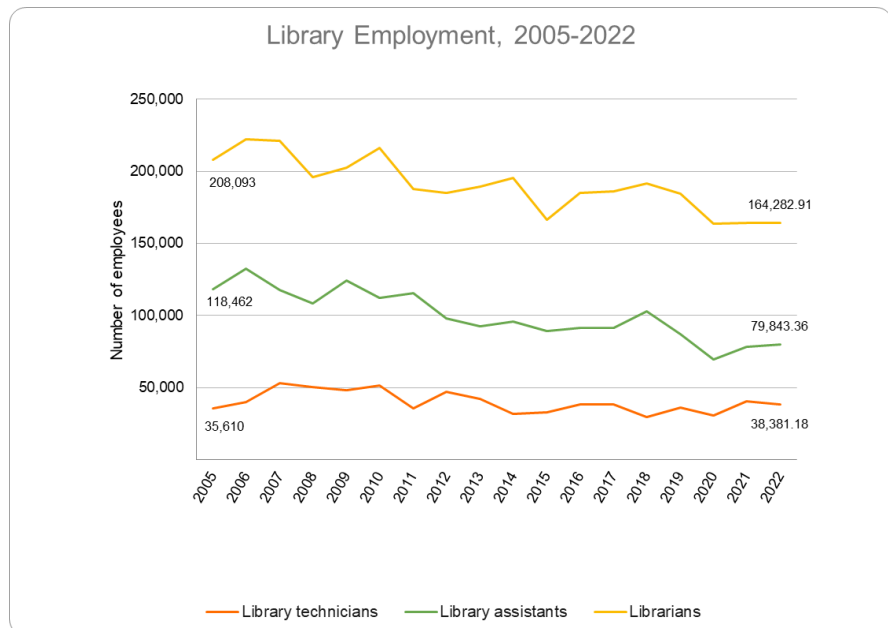
Librarians and other library professionals provide essential services for schools, universities, and communities. Americans go to libraries for free, reliable, and well-organized access to books, the Internet, and other sources of information and entertainment; assistance finding work; research and reference 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 2022, there were approximately 164,280 librarians, 38,380 library technicians, and 79,840 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 held relatively steady over the past two years after a significant drop in 2020. This is most likely due to the widespread health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced some libraries to close for at least part of that year, and most others to operate



¹ U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey Microdata. 2022. Available at <https://data.census.gov/mdat>

on altered schedules. Before the pandemic, employment of professionals had been gradually declining after hitting a peak of 394,900 in 2006.²

Library Programs

- In 2020, more than 17,000 U.S. public libraries circulated about 2.1 billion print and electronic materials and offered 3.6 million programs, attended by about 79 million members of the public. Children’s programs accounted for 53 percent of all programs offered, serving almost 50 million children and parents.³
- Electronic media, computer use and internet access are an increasing component of library materials and services, and e-books now comprise 32 percent of all collection materials. In addition, library patrons accessed 284,500 public computers over 122 million times during 2020.⁴ The number of users of public computers in 2020 dropped by over half compared to the use of computers before the COVID-19 pandemic, likely due to libraries instituting safety precautions (including closing some locations) during the height of the pandemic.
- Libraries provide important training and educational programs for the public. A 2015 survey revealed that 90 percent of public libraries offer at least basic digital literacy training, and in many cases more advanced technology training; 73 percent provide programs to assist patrons with job applications and resume creation; and 77 percent offer assistance with finding and applying for health insurance.⁵
- 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.⁶
- In 2016, 46 percent of adults said they used a public library or bookmobile in the previous 12 months. Millennials (born 1981-1996) had the highest usage rate of any generation over the age of 18 at the time of the study, at 53 percent.⁷

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

² *Ibid.*

³ The Institute of Museum and Library Services. (2022). Public Libraries in the United States: Fiscal year 2020. Available at <https://www.imls.gov/research-evaluation/data-collection/public-libraries-survey/explore-pls-data/pls-data>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Bertot, John Carlo, Brian Real, Jean Lee, Abigail J. McDermott & Paul T. Jaeger. “2014 Digital Inclusion Survey: Survey Findings and Results.” Information Policy and Access Center. University of Maryland College Park. October 1, 2015. Available at <https://digitalinclusion.umd.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/2014DigitalInclusionSurveyFinalRelease.pdf>

⁶ Horrigan, John B. “Libraries 2016” Pew Research Center, September 2016.

⁷ Geiger, Abigail. “Millennials are the most likely generation of Americans to use public libraries.” *FactTank*. Pew Research Center. June 21, 2017. Available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/21/millennials-are-the-most-likely-generation-of-americans-to-use-public-libraries/>. Note that members of Gen Z (born 1997-2012) were not part of this study.

programs to a variety of audiences, including young children, students, professionals, and the elderly.⁸

- 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.⁹
- 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.¹⁰

Where Library Professionals Work

- Librarian employment in 2022 was split between public libraries (42 percent), elementary and secondary schools (24 percent), colleges, universities and professional schools (22 percent), and other libraries and archives, including those at businesses, law firms, nonprofit organizations and scientific organizations (12 percent).¹¹
- Among library technician employment in 2022, 63 percent worked at public libraries, and 12 percent worked at elementary and secondary schools. Only 2 percent of library technicians were employed by colleges, universities, and professional schools, and another 2 percent worked for religious organizations. The remainder (21 percent) were employed by other libraries and archives, including those at businesses, nonprofit organizations, and scientific organizations.
- Employment of library assistants in 2022 was split between public libraries (48 percent), colleges, universities and professional schools (20 percent), elementary and secondary schools (15 percent), and other libraries and archives, including those at businesses, nonprofit organizations, public administration agencies, and hospitals (17 percent).¹²
- In 2022, 25.4 percent of librarians, 41.9 percent of library technicians, and 60.9 percent of library assistants worked part-time.¹³

Diversity and Demographics of Library Professionals

The librarian profession suffers from a persistent lack of racial and ethnic diversity that has not changed significantly over the past 15 years.¹⁴

⁸ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, “Librarians.” 2021. Available at: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/librarians.htm>

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Occupational Outlook Handbook, Library Technicians and Library Assistants.” 2021. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/library-technicians-and-assistants.htm>

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey Microdata. 2022. Available at <https://data.census.gov/mdat> For the purposes of this factsheet, all private sector libraries and archives are included in the “other private and nonprofit libraries” classification, though some private, not-for-profit libraries (such as the Carnegie system of libraries in Pittsburgh) play the role of public libraries in their communities.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ In comparison, librarians were 85.3 percent white in 2015, 84 percent white in 2010 and 88.3 percent white in 2005. Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey Microdata. 2005-2015. Available at <https://data.census.gov/mdat>

- Just over 82 percent of librarians identified as white in 2022. Library technicians and assistants were slightly more diverse. Among library assistants, 77 percent identified as white in 2022.¹⁵
- In 2022, only 4.3 percent of librarians identified as Black or African American, a steep decline from 9.5 percent in 2020. Librarians who identified as Hispanic or Latino (of any race) numbered 8.0 percent, and those identifying as Asian-American or Pacific Islander made up 5.1 percent.¹⁶
- Librarians are slightly less diverse than the workforce of professionals in all education, training, and library occupations, which is 80.4 percent white. Black and African American professionals make up 11.2 percent of the education workforce, while Hispanic and Asian professionals represented 11.7 percent and 5.4 percent of the education workforce, respectively.¹⁷
- Librarians and other library professionals are also older than the general workforce. While Americans over 55 accounted for 23.6 percent of the total workforce in 2022, 31.0 percent of librarians were over the age of 55.¹⁸

Educational 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 2022, 59.6 percent of librarians held a master’s degree or higher. 21.9 percent held a bachelor’s degree, and 7.3 percent held an associate’s degree.²⁰
- In comparison, 10.5 percent of library technicians and 7.7 percent of library assistants held a master’s degree or higher in 2022. 18.1 percent of technicians and 28.6 percent of assistants held a bachelor’s degree; 4.5 percent of technicians and 22.0 percent of assistants held associates’ degrees; and 38.2 percent of technicians and 10.4 percent of library assistants had a high school diploma or equivalent.²¹

Women and Library Professions

- In 2022, women accounted for 82.2 percent of all librarians, and 78.5 percent of library assistants, which was above the average of 73.3 percent for women employed in all education and library professions.²² The library professions have predominantly employed women for

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Table 11: Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, Annual Averages, 2022. Available at <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf>

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Table 11b: Employed persons by detailed occupation and age, 2022. Available at <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11b.htm>

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, “Librarians.” 2021. Available at: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/librarians.htm>

²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey Microdata. 2022. Available at <https://data.census.gov/mdat>

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Table 11: Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, Annual Averages, 2022. Available at <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf>

years. In comparison, in 1995, women were 83.9 percent of librarians, and in 2003, women were 84.4 percent of librarians.²³

- Women represented 82.2 percent of graduates in Master of Library Science (MLS) programs in 2018-2019. However, Black women only accounted for 4.5 percent of all MLS graduates, while Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander women made up 7.8 and 2.5 percent of the 2019 class, respectively.²⁴

Library Worker Earnings and the Wage Gap

In 2021, the mean hourly wage for librarians working full-time was \$30.86 and the mean annual salary was \$64,180. The mean hourly wage was \$18.79 for library technicians and \$15.62 for library assistants.²⁵

Regional Variance in Salaries

Librarian earnings vary significantly from region to region. The District of Columbia had the highest mean annual earnings for full-time librarians at \$87,540 in 2021, followed by Washington, California, Maryland, and New York. The five lowest paying states were Mississippi, where the mean annual salary was \$44,240, followed by Idaho, South Dakota, West Virginia, and Utah.²⁶ 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. On average, librarians working full-time at colleges, universities, and professional schools earned \$69,070 in 2021, elementary and secondary school librarians earned \$66,520 and librarians employed by local governments (excluding education) made \$58,750.²⁷

Gender Inequality

Pay inequity remains a persistent and pervasive problem in society. In 2022, median weekly earnings for women in all occupations were 83 percent of men's earnings.²⁸ For most women of color, the earnings gap is even larger: African American women earned just 72.4 cents for every dollar earned by men of all races in 2022 and Hispanic and Latina women earned just 65.9 cents on the dollar.²⁹ Asian women were the only racial group to earn more than men of all races, but they still earned only 79.2 cents to the dollar reported by Asian men.³⁰

²³ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Annual Averages, 1995, and 2003, Table 11, op. cit.

²⁴ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics. Tables 323.40 and 323.50. 2018-2019. Available at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/2020menu_tables.asp

²⁵ Occupational Employment Statistics. Bureau of Labor Statistics. May 2021. Available at https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_stru.htm

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Table 37, "Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by selected characteristics." 2022. Available at: <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat37.pdf>.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Though library occupations are predominantly held by women, a wage gap still exists in the profession. In 2021, women working as full-time librarians (35 hours or more per week) reported median annual earnings that were only 88 percent of the median annual earnings reported by men.³¹

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.³²

Health Benefits

In 2021, 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 93 percent. 2.7 percent of librarians were uninsured in 2021.³³

- Among library technicians in 2021, just 66 percent received health insurance through a current or former employer or union. Though 77 percent of library technicians working full-time received health insurance through their employer or union, a total of 5 percent of library technicians were uninsured in 2021.³⁴
- Library assistants had coverage similar to that of library technicians. Just 63 percent had employer-provided health insurance in 2021, though the rate was higher for full-time library assistants at 92 percent, leaving 7.9 percent of library assistants uninsured in 2021.³⁵

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 2022, professionals working in education, training, and library occupations had the highest unionization rate for any professional occupation group, 37.3 percent.³⁶
- In 2022, 25 percent of librarians were union members.³⁷

³¹ U.S. Census Bureau. Full-Time, Year-Round Workers & Median Earnings by Sex & Occupation. American Community Survey. 2021. Available at

<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/industry-occupation/median-earnings.html>

³² Bartholomew, Amy, Jennifer Dorning, Julia Eisenstein, & Shannon Farrell. "Advocating for Better Salaries Toolkit." ALA Allied Professional Association. April 2017. Available at

<http://ala-apa.org/files/2010/02/2017-ALA-APA-BETTER-SALARIES-TOOLKIT-6th-ed.pdf>

³³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata, 2021. Available at

<https://data.census.gov/mdat/>

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Table 42. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers by occupation and industry." 2022. Available at <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat42.htm>

³⁷ Hirsch, Barry and Macpherson, David. Union Membership, Coverage, Density, and Employment by Occupation, 2022. *Union Membership and Coverage Database from the CPS*. Available at <http://unionstats.com/>

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 2022, librarians who were union members earned 37 percent more per week than their non-union counterparts.³⁸ While this statistic is subject to volatility due to the small sample size, trends in the data show that it pays to be a union librarian.

In 2022, union library assistants earned 15 percent more per week than their non-union counterparts.³⁹ Due to the small sample size, 2022 union wage data is not available for library technicians.

Union members are more likely than their non-union counterparts to be covered by a retirement plan, health insurance, and paid sick leave. In 2022, 95 percent of union members in the civilian workforce had access to a retirement plan, compared with only 69 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. And 92 percent of union members in the civilian workforce had access to paid sick leave compared to 77 percent of non-union workers.⁴⁰

Union Success Stories

Featured below are some highlights from union library professionals since 2020.

In March 2023, the Maryland House of Delegates passed a bill granting collective bargaining rights to Maryland public library employees. Before the passing of this bill, the right of these employees to collectively bargain was determined on a county-by-county basis. Library professionals across the state will now be able to collectively negotiate with their employers for better pay and benefits and improved working conditions through union representation. Additionally, in 2022, after fighting for years for their right to collectively bargain in Baltimore County, Maryland, public library employees voted to unionize and join the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW).⁴¹ IAMAW helped advocate for Maryland public library employees by working with them to pass this important bill.

Significantly, also in March 2023, the state of Michigan repealed its anti-union right-to-work law, which allowed employees in unionized workplaces to opt out of paying dues while still reaping the benefits of union representation. When the law goes into effect next year, Michigan's union library professionals – and unionized employees more generally – will be part of stronger unions that can better support the needs of its members.

³⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey Microdata. 2022. Available at <https://data.census.gov/mdat>.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2022. Available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/eps2.pdf>

⁴¹ DeVillie, Taylor. "Baltimore County Library Staff Votes to Form Union." *Baltimore Sun*. January 7, 2022.

Available at

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-county/bs-md-co-county-library-staff-unionize-20220107-unnyd7xavvbsrcj3amgwda7fry-story.html>

In July 2022, librarians, archivists, and curators across all three University of Michigan campuses ratified their first contract after voting the previous year to join in union with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Local 6244, the Lecturers' Employee Organization. Among other substantial gains, the librarians, archivists, and curators on the lowest end of the pay scale received raises between 9% and 30%. Additionally, collective bargaining granted academic freedom to these library professionals, a right afforded to university faculty.⁴²

Also in 2022, public library professionals in Grandview Heights, OH and college library professionals at the Claremont Colleges in Claremont, CA joined in union with AFT.

In January 2021, professional and clerical employees (including librarians) at Augsburg University in Minneapolis, Minnesota voted to unionize and join the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) Local 12. The staff came together to organize a union in order to gain a say in how the university was approaching the COVID-19 pandemic, including layoffs, pay cuts and reopening plans, as well as to address persistent concerns about pay equity, paid family leave and increasing workloads. After the vote to unionize, Mike Bloomberg, a librarian at the university, said, "We need systems in place to protect and support each other, and a legally binding contract will give us those systems. I believe in the Augsburg mission and I think our union will give us the security Augsburg employees need to better live that mission and serve our students."⁴³

In March 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the United States, many public services and institutions shut down indefinitely. In Pittsburgh, librarians and other professionals at the Carnegie Library worked with their recently-organized union, affiliated with the United Steelworkers, to successfully demand that library employees should not be required to report to library facilities and should be paid regardless of their ability to work from home.⁴⁴

If you are a library professional looking for more information about organizing a union to secure your rights in the workplace, please get in touch with DPE at 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.

⁴² Dodge, Samuel. "17% Salary Increase Part of First-ever Librarian Union Deal with University of Michigan." *Michigan Live*. July 29, 2022. Available at <https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2022/07/17-salary-increase-part-of-first-ever-librarian-union-deal-with-university-of-michigan.html>

⁴³ Gomez, Filiberto Nolasco. "Augsburg Staff Vote for a Union." *Workday Minnesota*. January 8, 2021. Available at <https://workdayminnesota.org/augsburg-staff-vote-for-a-union/>

⁴⁴ "Protect and Pay Carnegie Library Workers." March 2020. Available at <https://www.change.org/p/protect-and-pay-carnegie-library-workers>.

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