- Social/emotional learning
- Stand-alone instruction by librarians
- Standards-based test preparation/scores
- State government mandate
- Strategic plan

Factors identified by interviewees who reported reducing, eliminating, combining, or reclassifying librarians were coded as one or more of the following:

- Budget constraints
- Change in administration
- Change in priorities
- Closed a building or decreased enrollment
- Difficulty finding qualified candidates
- Hired other specialists/coaches
- Needed incumbent in another position
- Needed more teachers in classrooms
- Position deemed obsolete
- Retirements/resignations
- Strategic plan

Types of Factors

An evolving two-tier coding scheme was applied to understand the factors that motivated decisions to make staffing changes.

Interviewee responses about factors motivating staffing decisions were coded using two sets of initial codes, one for gains and another for losses of librarians. (See Tables 1 and 2.)

Factors identified as motivators of staffing decisions were assigned to three categories: structural, pragmatic, and strategic. The development of these three categories was based on the evolutionary organization theoretical perspective, existing knowledge about decisions impacting school librarian employment, and the initial review of interviews.

Structural factors are ones that drive decisions automatically, such as state mandates, opening and closing of school buildings, and formulas and guidelines, sometimes enshrined in legal rules and regulations. "Pipeline" issues—whether or not and where school librarians are available to schools or districts—may also drive structural decisions. A school leader in a rural area, for example, might wish to hire a school librarian, but be unable to find qualified individuals to consider for the position. So, as a result, another position is filled instead. Conversely, a school leader in an urban area—perhaps one near a library school that trains school librarians—might choose to hire

more librarians partly because they are available. Structural factors may explain the presence or absence of school librarians as well as their increasing or decreasing presence.

Pragmatic factors are ones that motivate school leaders to address practical, often logistical issues that demand some kind of resolution in order for a school or district to function efficiently. "Coverage" is the umbrella term often used by decision-makers to explain such decisions. For example, a frequently reported pragmatic decision is moving a librarian with teaching qualifications from managing the library program to teaching in a classroom. This sort of decision might eliminate a librarian job altogether or change it from full-time to part-time. No external policy or structural factor is mandating such a specific reassignment, and it is not being made to meet some specific strategic goal. It is simply a matter of ensuring that there is a qualified teacher in every classroom. The COVID-19 pandemic also presented many decision-makers with urgent needs to re-assign staff. Pragmatic considerations could drive decisions that increase, reduce, eliminate, or otherwise change librarian employment; although, most such factors explained reduction or elimination of librarian positions.

Strategic factors are ones at the discretion of school leaders, but driven less by practical concerns than by their anticipated and perceived contributions to specific ends the decision-maker wishes to achieve. A common example of such a decision is when librarian jobs are cut because the decision-maker prioritizes hiring reading, writing, or math coaches to help raise students' scores on state tests. Conversely, a decision-maker might decide to hire more librarians if they perceive that librarians make a substantial contribution to higher scores on reading or writing tests by promoting inquiry-based learning and teaching information literacy skills. Like structural decisions, strategic ones can result in gains, cutbacks, or elimination of school librarians.

Structural, pragmatic, and strategic factors involved in decisions to add or restore librarians are listed in rank order in Table 1.

Table 1. Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore Librarians by Type in Rank Order

Structural Factors	Pragmatic Factors	Strategic Factors
New funding (8)	Planning time for teachers (7)	Change in priorities (13)
Opened a new building/enrollment increase (7)		Direct/stand-alone instruction (11)
State government mandate (4)		Equity of student access to staff (10)
Grant/funding requirements (2)		Change in administration (9)
		Collaboration with teachers (7)
		Standards-based testing (4)
		Special student needs (3)
		Social/emotional learning (2)
		Strategic plan (2)

Decision-making factors in decisions to reduce, eliminate, combine, or reclassify librarians are listed in rank order in Table 2.

Table 2. Factors in Decisions to Reduce, Eliminate, Combine or Reclassify Librarians by Type in Rank Order

Structural Factors	Pragmatic Factors	Strategic Factors
Budget constraints (17)	Needed incumbent in another position (6)	Change in priorities (12)
Closed a building/enrollment decrease (6)	Needed more teachers in classrooms (5)	Hired other specialists/coaches (7)
Pipeline issues finding qualified candidates (4)		Position deemed obsolete (6)
Retirements/resignations (2)		Change in administration (4)
		Strategic plan (2)

In reality, decisions were rarely made exclusively on the basis of structural, pragmatic, or strategic factors. More often, multiple types of factors were involved in most decisions about school librarian employment.

Advantages, Disadvantages & Tradeoffs

To ascertain the relative costs and benefits of their decisions about school librarian employment, interviewees were asked about the perceived advantages, disadvantages, and tradeoffs they weighed in their decisions. In some cases, advantages were perceived in win-win terms and disadvantages in lose-lose terms. Increasing the presence of librarians enabled them to do more for students and teachers; decreasing their presence meant they had to do less for those constituencies. In other cases, tradeoffs were perceived in win-lose terms or lose-win terms. If librarians gained, other positions were cut; if librarians were cut, other positions gained.

Answers to this question were coded as one or more of the following, depending on whether their decision was positive or negative in its impact on librarian employment and positive or negative in its other consequences:

- Added or restored librarian / other staff cut, not filled
- Added or restored librarian / other-than-staff loss
- Reduced, eliminated, combined, or reclassified librarian /other staff added or increased
- Reduced, eliminated, combined, or reclassified librarian/other-than-staff gain
- Increased or decreased specific types of staff activity, specifically: stand-alone instruction by librarian, collaboration between librarian and teachers, and teacher support by librarian
- Increased or decreased the utility of the library space
- Other