

Thematic Analysis of Interviews

The analysis summarizes the responses to each interview question and cross-tabulates the answers to questions and combinations of questions that shed new light on the decision-making processes of school leaders impacting librarian and related employment.

Interviewees

Of the 49 usable interviews of school leaders, 23 interviewees made decisions to add or restore school librarians, 21 made decisions to reduce, eliminate, combine, or reclassify librarians, and 5 made both types of decisions. To put the 49 interviews in context, however, the first step in the analysis was to summarize who the interviewees were by geography and position and to examine how their districts compared to all other local school districts based on geography and key district characteristics.

Geography

Districts represented by SLIDE interviewees were compared to all other local school districts using 2021-2022 national data from the Common Core of Data (CCD) of NCES. (See Map 1.) Interview districts include local school districts from 29 states and the District of Columbia. Notably, 26 states mandate some level of school librarians, so were less likely to have districts that would be selected for interviews, because their staffing levels were more stable (Kachel & Lance, 2021, p. 4). Of the states with participating interviewees, four states were represented that had enforced staffing mandates (D.C., Montana, Nebraska, and North Dakota); eight states were represented that do not enforce their mandates (Maine, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington).

Interview states include eight Northeastern states: Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts (3 interviews), Maine, New Jersey (2), New York (2), Pennsylvania (3), and Vermont. (Unless otherwise noted, there was a single interview from each state.) The South was represented by four states—Maryland, Tennessee, Texas (3), and Virginia—as well as the District of Columbia. Interviewees came from eight Midwestern states: Indiana, Kansas (5), Michigan, Minnesota (2), Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Ohio. Nine interview states were in the West: California, Colorado (4), Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon (3), Utah, Washington (2), and Wyoming. Thus, there were nine interview states in the West, eight each in the Northeast and Midwest, and four in the South plus D.C. Again, the absence of more interviews in the South is almost certainly due to the greater likelihood that states in that region mandated school librarians. Doubtless, this broad geographic representation could not have been achieved without the active support of the state intermediaries, the project partners, Advisory Council members, and others.

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Map 1.

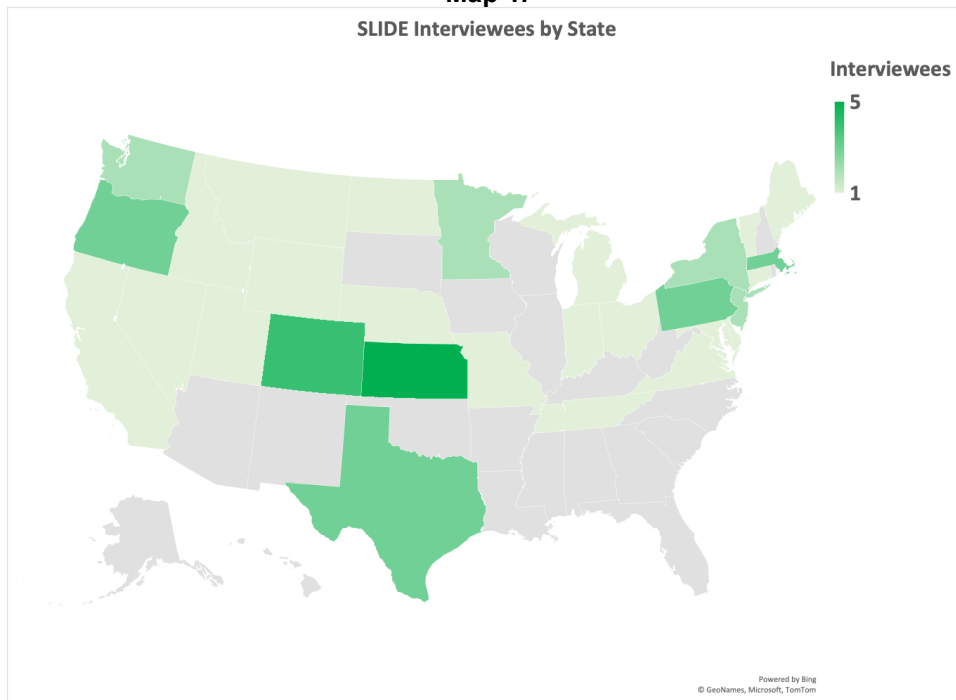


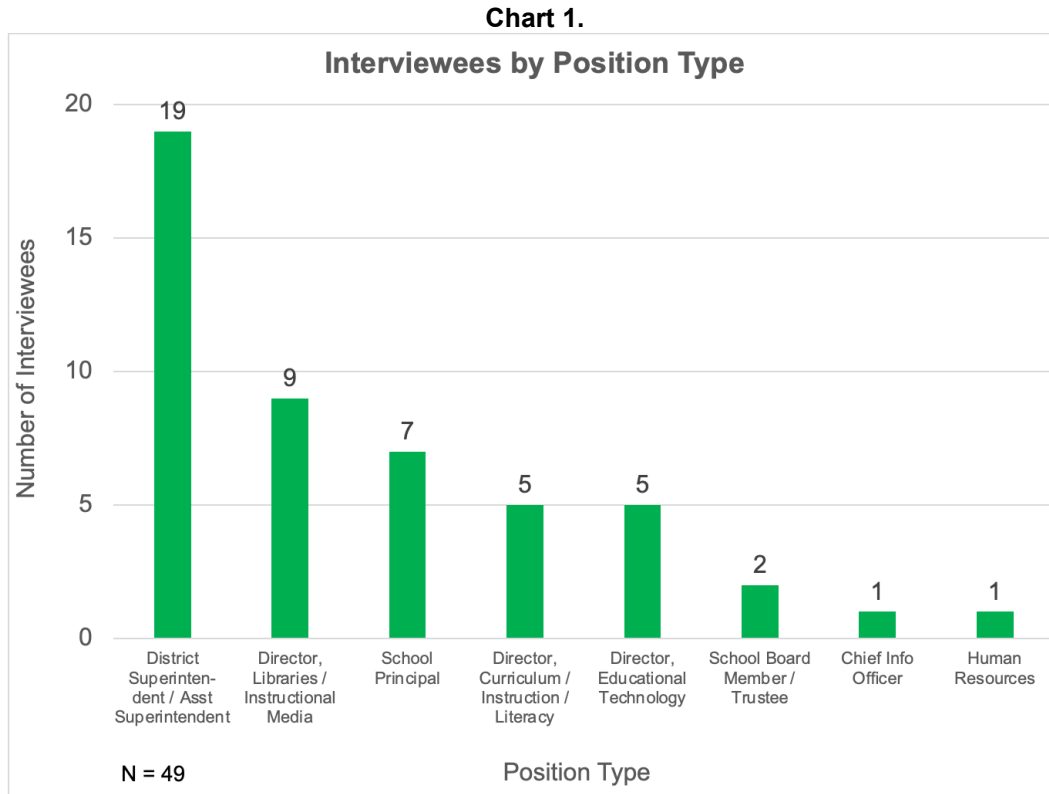
Table 3. Number of Interviewees by State

State	Interviewees	State	Interviewees
CA	1	ND	1
CO	4	NE	1
CT	1	NJ	2
DC	1	NV	1
DE	1	NY	2
ID	1	OH	1
IN	1	OR	3
KS	5	PA	3
MA	3	TN	1
MD	1	TX	3
ME	1	UT	1
MI	1	VA	1
MN	2	VT	1
MO	1	WA	2
MT	1	WY	1

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Position Type

Of the 49 interviewees, the vast majority, 42, were district level officials—19 were district superintendents or assistant superintendents; nine were directors of libraries or instructional media; five were directors of curriculum, instruction, or literacy; five were directors of educational technology; two were school board members or trustees; one was a chief information officer; and one was a human-resources official. Only seven were school principals. (See Chart 1.)



To assess the representativeness of the interview districts, they were compared statistically with all other districts on key district characteristics and student demographics:

- Student enrollment (ranging from 25,000 or more to less than 300),
- District locale (i.e., city, suburb, town, and rural),
- Per pupil expenditures (ranging from \$15,000 or more to less than \$10,000),
- Percentage of students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Meals (ranging from 75% or more—indicating districts with the most poverty—to less than 35%—indicating districts with the least poverty),
- Majority race (majority non-white vs. majority white), and
- Majority ethnicity (majority Hispanic vs. majority non-Hispanic).

Tables 1-6 present comparative data for each of these variables.

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Student Enrollment

School leaders interviewed for SLIDE overrepresent districts with higher student enrollment with 73.9 percent of interview districts having enrollments of more than 2,500 compared to 28.0 percent nationally. (See Table 4.) The greatest percentage difference is for the more than 25,000 category, which includes 30.4 percent of interview districts compared with only 2.0 percent of all local districts. This gap is found in the districts with student enrollment less than 2,499 where school leaders interviewed under-represent districts at 26.1 percent in comparison to 72.0 percent of national districts.

Table 4. Distribution of Interview Districts and All Other Districts by Student Enrollment, 2021-22

Group of Districts	Student Enrollment							
	25,000 or More	10,000-24,999	5,000-9,999	2,500-4,999	1,000-2,499	600-999	300-599	Less Than 300
Interview Districts (n=46)	30.4% (14)	10.9% (5)	10.9% (5)	21.7% (10)	15.2% (7)	6.5% (3)	2.2% (1)	2.2% (1)
All Other Districts (N=13,273)	2.0% (269)	4.6% (607)	7.5% (996)	13.9% (1,849)	23.8% (3,161)	13.7% (1,821)	14.4% (1,905)	20.1% (2,665)

Source: Common Core of Data (CCD), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2021-22 School Year
 Note: There were only 46 interview districts because there were multiple interviewees from a few districts.

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Locale

School leaders interviewed for SLIDE partially reflect the national breakdown of local districts by locale. 4 (See Table 5.) The percentage of interview districts in City locales is 43.5 percent in comparison to 6.0 percent nationally. The largest gap is found in the Rural location category with 15.2 percent representation of school leaders interviewed for SLIDE in comparison to 53.2 percent nationally. Interviewed leaders in both Suburb and Town locales align with the representation nationally. This data aligns with the findings for enrollment: districts with higher enrollments are over-represented, while districts with lower enrollments are under-represented. Rural districts tend to have lower enrollments, and City districts, higher enrollments.

Table 5. Distribution of Interview Districts and All Other Districts by Locale

Group of Districts	School District Locale			
	City	Suburb	Town	Rural
Interview Districts (n=46)	43.5% (20)	21.7% (10)	19.6% (9)	15.2% (7)
All Other Districts (N=13,343)	6.0% (807)	23.0% (3,064)	17.8% (2,378)	53.2% (7,094)

Source: Common Core of Data (CCD), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2021-22 School Year

⁴ The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) categorizes school districts by locale as follows:

- City: territory inside an urbanized area and a principal city; large cities having population of 250,000 or more; midsize cities having population greater than or equal to 100,000, but less than 250,000; and small cities having population less than 100,000.
- Suburb: territory inside an urbanized area but outside a principal city; large suburbs being associated with large cities, midsize suburbs with midsize cities, and small suburbs with small cities.
- Town: territory inside an urban cluster; fringe towns being less than or equal to 10 miles from an urbanized area; distant towns being more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an urbanized area; and remote towns being more than 35 miles from an urbanized area.
- Rural area: territory defined as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau; fringe rural areas being less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area and less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster; distant rural areas being more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area or more than 2.5 miles and less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster; and remote rural areas being more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and more than 10 miles from an urban cluster (NCES, n.d.)

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Per Pupil Expenditures

School leaders interviewed for SLIDE generally reflect the national breakdown of local districts by per pupil expenditures (includes salaries, employee benefits, purchased services, supplies, and tuition). (See Table 6.) Interview districts are slightly overrepresented in the top two categories and underrepresented in the bottom two categories. 84.5 percent of leaders interviewed are in the two top categories, in which states spend more than \$12,000 per pupil, versus 75.9 percent nationally. School districts in the bottom two categories, in which states spend less than \$11,999 per pupil, are less represented in SLIDE at 15.5 percent versus 24.1 percent nationally. This suggests that the interview districts somewhat over-represent districts with higher per pupil expenditure levels compared to other districts nationwide.

Table 6. Distribution of Interview Districts and All Other Districts by Per Pupil Expenditures, 2019-20

Group of Districts	Per Pupil Expenditures			
	\$15,000 or More	\$12,000-14,999	\$10,000-11,999	Less Than \$10,000
Interview Districts (n=45)	55.6% (25)	28.9% (13)	13.3% (6)	2.2% (1)
All Other Districts (N=13,044)	49.1% (6,402)	26.8% (3,496)	18.1% (2,365)	6.0% (781)

Source: Common Core of Data (CCD), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2019-20 School Year.
 Note: Per pupil expenditures data are for 2019-20, 2 years behind other data, because they are released separately after auditing. There are only 45 interview districts for per pupil expenditures due to one district not reporting.

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Eligibility for Free/Reduced-Price Meals (Poverty)

School leaders interviewed for SLIDE partially reflect the national breakdown of local districts on the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals (FARM). (See Table 7.) Districts with higher percentages of FARM-eligible students are ones with higher levels of community poverty. The percentage of interview districts with 75 percent or more and 35 to 49.9 percent of students eligible for FARM closely align with the national data. The greatest percentage difference is for the less than 35 percent category—districts with the least poverty—which includes 61.8 percent of interview districts compared with only 40.6 percent of all local districts. This is followed by a smaller percentage gap for the 50 to 74.9 percent group, which includes only 5.9 percent of interview districts, but 21.0 percent of all local districts. Notably, however, the proportional gap for this group—interview districts represent less than a third of all districts in this category—is larger than for the less than 35 percent category. This suggests that the interview districts under-represent districts with 50 to 74.9 percent of students eligible for FARM more than they over-represent districts with less than 35 percent of students eligible for FARM, when compared with other districts nationwide.

Table 7. Distribution of Interview Districts and All Other Districts on Percent of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Price Meals (Poverty Indicator), 2021-22

Group of Districts	Percent of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced-Price Meals			
	75% or More	50-74.9%	35-49.9%	Less Than 35%
Interview Districts (n=34)	11.8% (4)	5.9% (2)	20.6% (7)	61.8% (21)
All Other Districts (N=9,663)	11.3% (1,093)	21.0% (2,034)	27.1% (2,614)	40.6% (3,922)

Source: Common Core of Data (CCD), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2021-22 School Year.
 Note: FARM data were only available for 34 of the 46 interview districts. These data had to be aggregated from school to district level, and incomplete reporting by some schools made it impossible to calculate a district figure.

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Race & Ethnicity

In terms of both majority race and majority ethnicity, interview districts are remarkably representative of all other local districts. In the case of majority race, majority non-white districts are approximately a quarter of all districts. In the case of majority ethnicity, majority Hispanic districts are about four percent of interview districts, and about nine percent of all other local districts. Because of the relatively small proportions of majority Hispanic districts, however, this percentage difference is not statistically significant. (See Tables 8 and 9.)

Table 8. Distribution of Interview Districts and All Other Districts on Majority Race (white vs. non-white), 2021-22

Group of Districts	Majority Race	
	Majority non-white	Majority white
Interview Districts (n=46)	12 (26.1%)	34 (73.9%)
All Other Districts (N=13,021)	3,136 (24.1%)	9,885 (75.9%)

Source: Common Core of Data (CCD), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2021-22 School Year

Table 9. Distribution of Interview Districts and All Other Districts on Majority Ethnicity (Hispanic vs. non-Hispanic), 2021-22

Group of Districts	Majority Ethnicity	
	Majority Hispanic	Majority non-Hispanic
Interview Districts (n=46)	2 (4.3%)	44 (95.7%)
All Other Districts (N=12,981)	1,208 (9.3%)	11,773 (90.7%)

Source: Common Core of Data (CCD), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2021-22 School Year

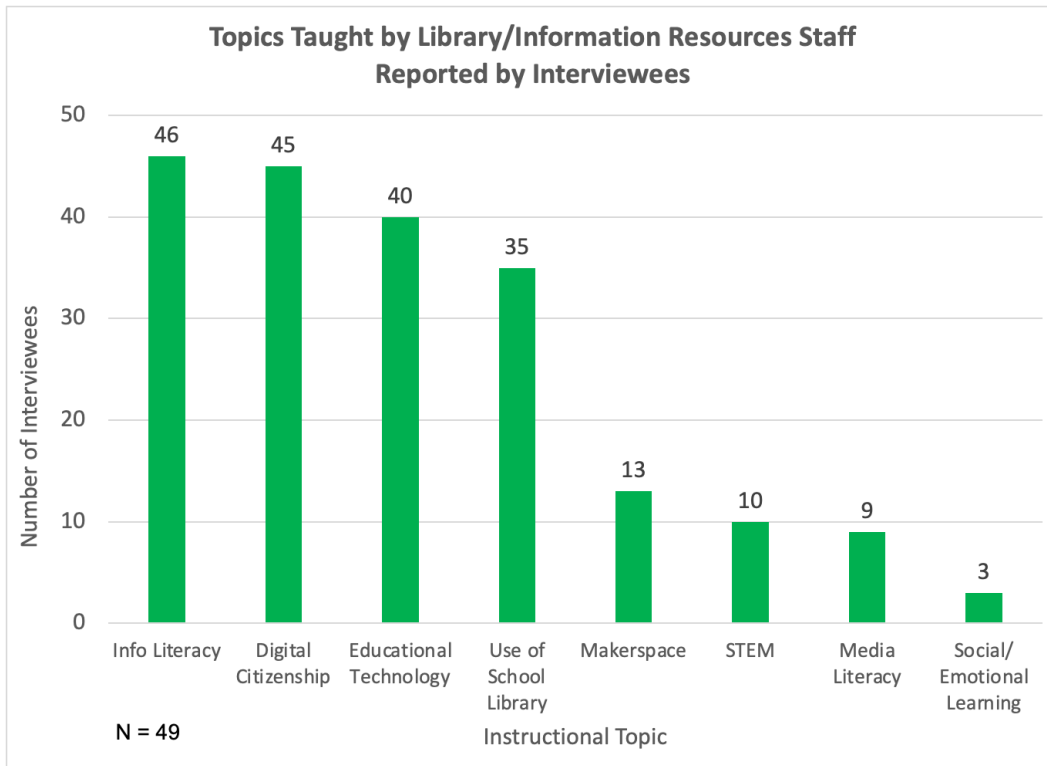
This comparative profile of interview districts and all other districts demonstrates that districts interviewed for SLIDE, although geographically representative, more often include school leaders from districts in cities as well as those with lower poverty levels and larger enrollments. However, interview districts are somewhat representative of all districts in terms of per pupil expenditures, and highly representative of them in terms of majority race and ethnicity.

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Instruction Topics

The first substantial question in the interview of each school leader concerned what library/information resources topics were taught in their schools. As information literacy, digital citizenship, educational technology or technology education, and use of the school library were examples mentioned in the question itself, it is unsurprising that those four instruction topics were the ones most frequently mentioned by interviewees. Additional topics identified by interviewees included makerspace, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), media literacy, and social/emotional learning. (See Chart 2.)

Chart 2.



Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Co-occurrence of Instructional Topics

The larger context of library and information resources-related topics is clearer when one considers which of the most frequently mentioned curricular topics coincided with each other, and how those concurrent topics varied between interviewees who reported adding school librarians and those who reported reducing, eliminating, combining, or reclassifying them. Among the 28 interviewees who added or restored librarians⁵, the instructional topics—in rank order—were information literacy, digital citizenship, educational technology, and use of the school library. Generally, a substantial proportion of both groups of interviewees indicated that these instructional topics tend to be taught together. It is noteworthy, though, that, whatever the interviewee’s decision about school librarian staffing, use of the school library was the least frequently mentioned instructional topic in the area of library and information resources of the four reported most frequently. The implication of these findings is that information literacy, digital citizenship, and educational technology were taught apart from use of the school library in some districts or use of the school library was not regarded as an instructional topic. (See Tables 10 and 11.)

Table 10. Co-occurrence of Instructional Topics Taught Reported by Interviewees Who Added or Restored School Librarians

Instruction Topic	Information Literacy	Digital Citizenship	Educational Technology	Use of School Library
Information Literacy	27			
Digital Citizenship	25	25		
Educational Technology	23	21	24	
Use of School Library	22	21	20	22

Note: The bold number in the gray diagonal is the number of interviewees in this group who identified that topic of instruction. Others reflect the number of interviewees identifying the topics in the intersecting rows and columns. N=28

Table 11. Co-occurrence of Instructional Topics Taught Reported by Interviewees Who Reduced, Eliminated, Combined or Reclassified School Librarians

Instruction Topic	Information Literacy	Digital Citizenship	Educational Technology	Use of School Library
Digital Citizenship	27			
Information Literacy	25	25		
Educational Technology	23	21	24	
Use of School Library	22	21	20	16

N=26

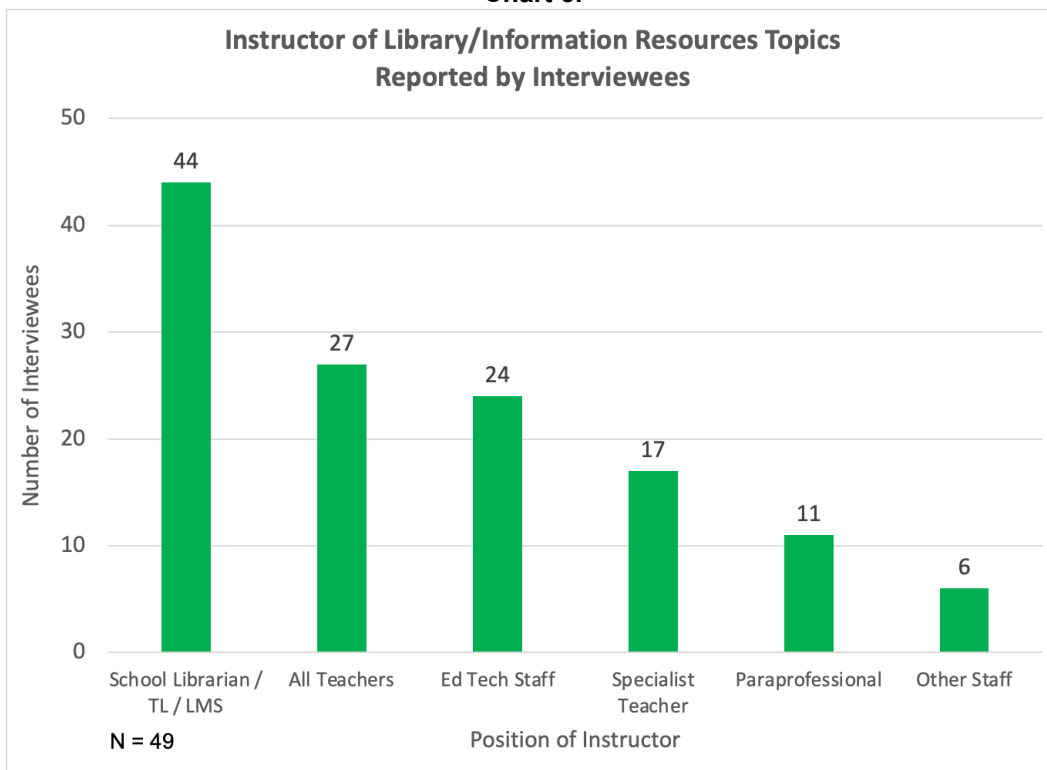
⁵ These 28 interviewees include 23 who only added or restored librarians plus four who both added or restored and reduced, eliminated, combined, or reclassified positions.

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Instructors of Library / Information Resources Topics

When interviewees were asked who taught the topic or topics they identified, by far the most frequent response (44) was a school librarian, teacher librarian, library media specialist, or the like. This included three interviewees who reported combined librarian/educational technology positions. That was not, however, the only position identified as addressing these instructional topics. Slightly more interviewees (27) reported that all teachers taught the identified topics than reported that educational technology staff (24) taught those topics. Smaller numbers of interviewees reported that such teaching was done by specialist teachers (17), paraprofessionals (11), or other staff (6). (See Chart 3.)

Chart 3.



Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Instructional Topic & Instructor

The “disconnect” for some interviewees between teaching use of the school library and teaching other instructional topics related to information resources—specifically, information literacy, digital citizenship, and educational technology—makes the responses of the interviewees about who teaches those topics even more interesting. (See Tables 12 and 13.)

Almost all of the interviewees who made positive decisions about school librarian jobs identified them as teachers of those four inter-related topics. Indeed, school librarians were the most frequently mentioned instructors on those topics among all interviewees, whether they made positive or negative decisions about librarian jobs. In the case of those who made positive decisions, school librarians were identified as instructors on those topics twice as often or more than the nearest other type of instructor—all teachers.

Notably, other instructor types—particularly all teachers and educational technology staff—were also mentioned as having responsibility for teaching these library/information resources topics. And, unsurprisingly, those instructor types—along with specialist teachers—were more frequently mentioned by interviewees who reduced, eliminated, combined, or reclassified school librarians.

While school librarians generally acknowledge that teaching such topics effectively requires their collaboration with other specialists as well as classroom teachers, these findings suggest that, where school librarian positions have been added or restored, many school leaders expect the school librarian to teach these topics without collegial support. As for school leaders who decided to reduce, eliminate, combine, or reclassify library jobs, far more of them indicated expecting other specialists and classroom teachers to at least share in teaching these topics. Perhaps this finding reflects the decision-maker’s recognition that a librarian whose hours have been reduced—in whatever way—cannot be expected to teach information-related topics as effectively as they might have done previously without the support of other teaching colleagues.

Voices of Decision-Makers

How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 12. Instructional Topic by Instructor Reported by Interviewees Who Added or Restored School Librarians

Instructor	Instructional Topic			
	Information Literacy	Digital Citizenship	Educational Technology	Use of School Library
School Librarian*	27	25	25	24
All Teachers	13	13	10	11
Educational Technology Staff	11	11	9	11
Specialist Teachers	6	6	7	6
Paraprofessionals	7	7	6	7

* School Librarian category includes combined School Librarian/Educational Technology Staff positions.
N=28

Table 13. Instructional Topic by Instructor Reported by Interviewees Who Reduced, Eliminated, Combined or Reclassified School Librarians

Instructor	Instructional Topic			
	Digital Citizenship	Information Literacy	Educational Technology	Use of School Library
School Librarian*	19	19	17	15
All Teachers	17	15	15	10
Educational Technology Staff	14	14	12	9
Specialist Teachers	11	9	10	6
Paraprofessionals	5	5	4	4

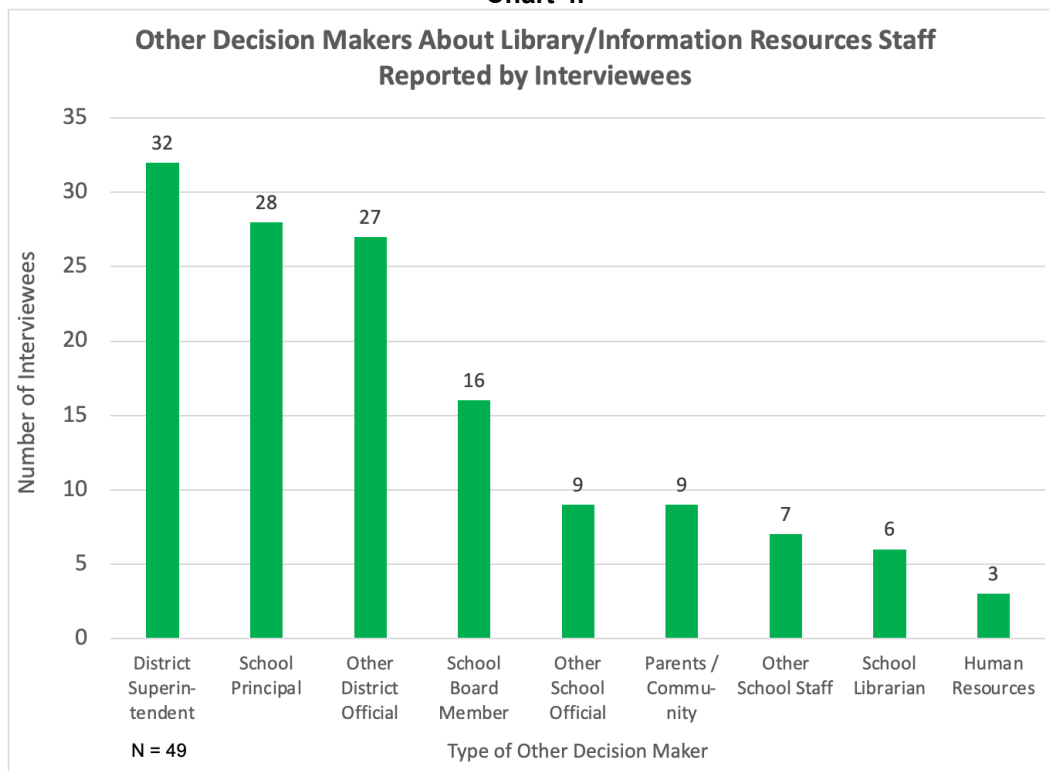
* School Librarian category does not include combined School Librarian/Educational Technology Staff positions as no such positions were reported by any of these interviewees.
N=26

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Other Decision-Makers

As reported earlier, most of the school leaders who agreed to be interviewed for SLIDE were district level officials. That being the case, it is unsurprising that their most frequent answers regarding who else participated in their decision-making about school librarians were district superintendents (32), school principals (28), and other district officials (27). Indicative of the more activist role being taken by school boards in the management of many districts, about a third of those interviewed (16) reported involving one or more school board members in their decision-making about librarian and related staffing. The next most frequently reported types of other decision-makers included other school officials (9), parents or community leaders (9), school staff (7), and incumbent school librarians (6). Finally, three interviewees reported involving human resources staff. In addition to these various other contributors to decision-making, two interviewees each mentioned referencing library association standards or guidelines and union contracts. (See Chart 4.)

Chart 4.



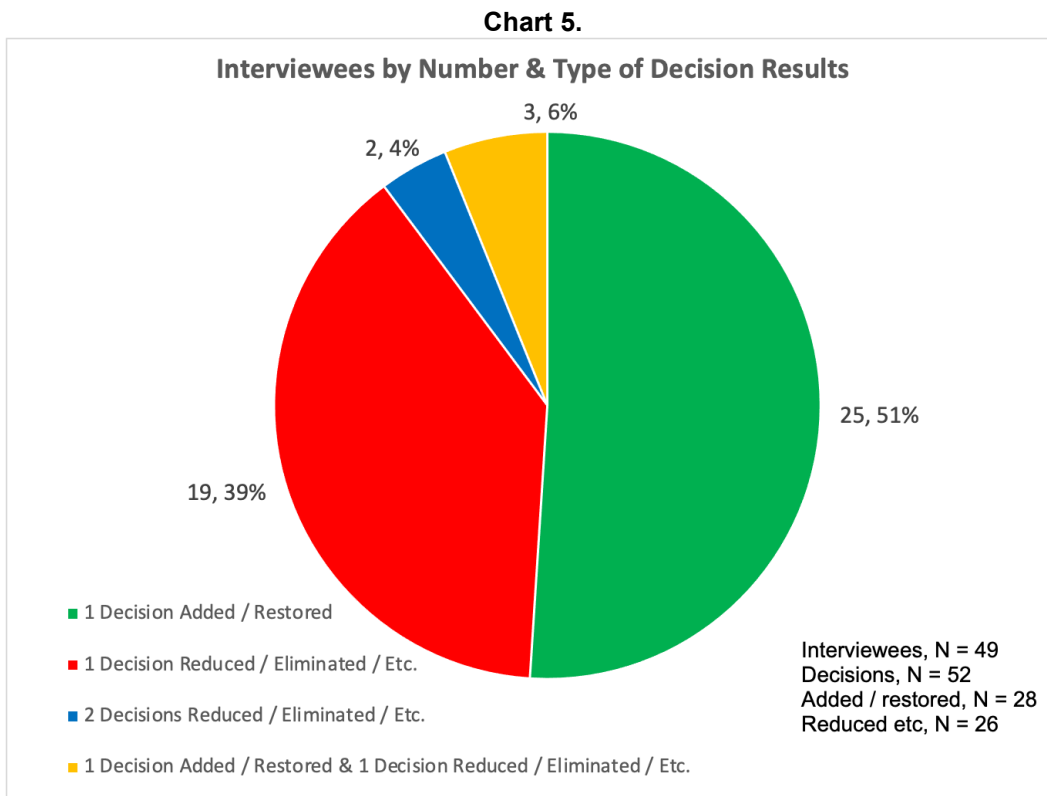
Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Decision Results

The results of interviewee decisions about school librarian employment fell into two almost equal size groups: 28 interviewees made decisions that resulted in school librarian full-time equivalents (FTEs) being added or restored, while 26 interviewees made decisions that resulted in those FTEs being reduced to a lower level, eliminated entirely, combined with other positions, or reclassified (i.e, changed job title, different position). Notably, the 49 interviewees reported 54 total decisions, five school leaders choosing to discuss more than one decision affecting school librarian employment. (See Chart 5.)

The 28 positive decisions include 25 interviewees who each made only one decision to add or restore librarians plus three interviewees, each of whom made a positive decision as well as a negative one. The 26 negative decisions include 19 interviewees who each made only one decision to reduce, eliminate, combine, or reclassify librarians plus two interviewees who each made two negative decisions and three interviewees who made negative as well as positive decisions.

Decisions resulting in librarian positions being either added or restored were over-represented relative to decisions resulting in librarians being reduced, eliminated, combined, or reclassified. For this reason as well as the substantive difference between such decisions, much of the subsequent analysis is separated into these two groups.



Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Decision Factors by Type

As interviews were completed and reviewed, project researchers sorted the decision factors identified by interviewees into three categories: structural, pragmatic, and strategic factors. Structural factors are pre-existing laws, regulations, or policies that drive staffing decisions automatically. Pragmatic factors are practical, often logistical problems that administrators must resolve. And strategic factors are ones initiated by leaders to advance district or school goals. (See pages 19 and 20 for fuller definitions and examples of these three types of factors.)

Among those who added or restored school librarians, the most frequent structural factors were new funding and opening a new school building or experiencing an enrollment increase. The lone pragmatic factor was providing for planning time for teachers. And the strategic decision-making factors that achieved double-digit mentions were change in priorities, stand-alone instruction by a librarian, and providing equity of student access to library staff. (See Table 14.)

Table 14. Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore Librarians by Decision 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)		Stand-alone instruction by librarians (11)
State government mandate (4)		Equity of student access to library 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)

Among interviewees who decided to reduce, eliminate, combine, or reclassify librarians, the most frequently-mentioned structural factor—indeed, the most frequently-mentioned factor of any type—was budget constraints. This is noteworthy, given that the question specifically asked the interviewee to think of factors other than this one. Other notable structural factors were closing a school building or experiencing an enrollment decrease and experiencing pipeline issues that made it difficult to find qualified candidates to fill librarian vacancies. Two related pragmatic factors were mentioned by several interviewees: needing staff in other positions and, in particular, needing more teachers to ensure there was one in every classroom or to manage class size. The three strategic factors most frequently cited by interviewees for their decisions to reduce, eliminate, combine, or reclassify librarians were making a change in priorities (a broad category), hiring other types of specialists or coaches instead of librarians, and believing the position of school librarian to be obsolete. (See Table 15.)

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 15. 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)

Factors by Type & Decision Results

The fact that school leaders who reported 54 decisions mentioned 174 factors indicates that, on average, each decision was based on three factors. A comparison of the decision factors identified by leaders who made positive and negative decisions about school librarian employment reveals an interesting difference. The largest number of potential factors by type was strategic followed by structural. Two-thirds of those who made positive decisions about school librarians attributed them to strategic factors, while only a quarter cited structural factors. (See Chart 6.) By contrast, those who made negative decisions about librarians attributed their decisions almost equally to strategic and structural factors. Those who made negative decisions were far more likely to cite structural factors than those who made positive decisions. (See Chart 7.)

These findings raise an interesting question about how school leaders perceive their own rationales for staffing decisions. One possibility is that district and school leaders who decided to add or restore librarian jobs were more inclined to attribute them to strategic factors, because they wanted credit for making positive decisions. On the other hand, leaders who decided to reduce, eliminate, combine, or reclassify librarian jobs may have been more inclined to attribute an often-unpopular decision to structural factors that were beyond their control.

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Chart 6.

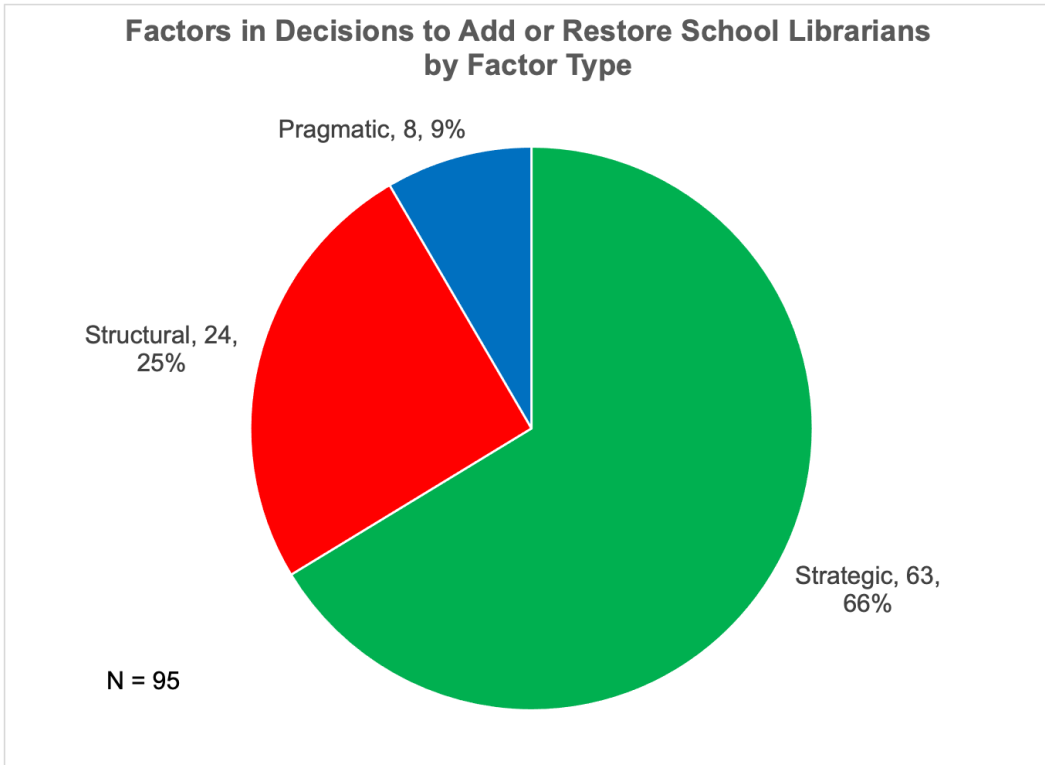
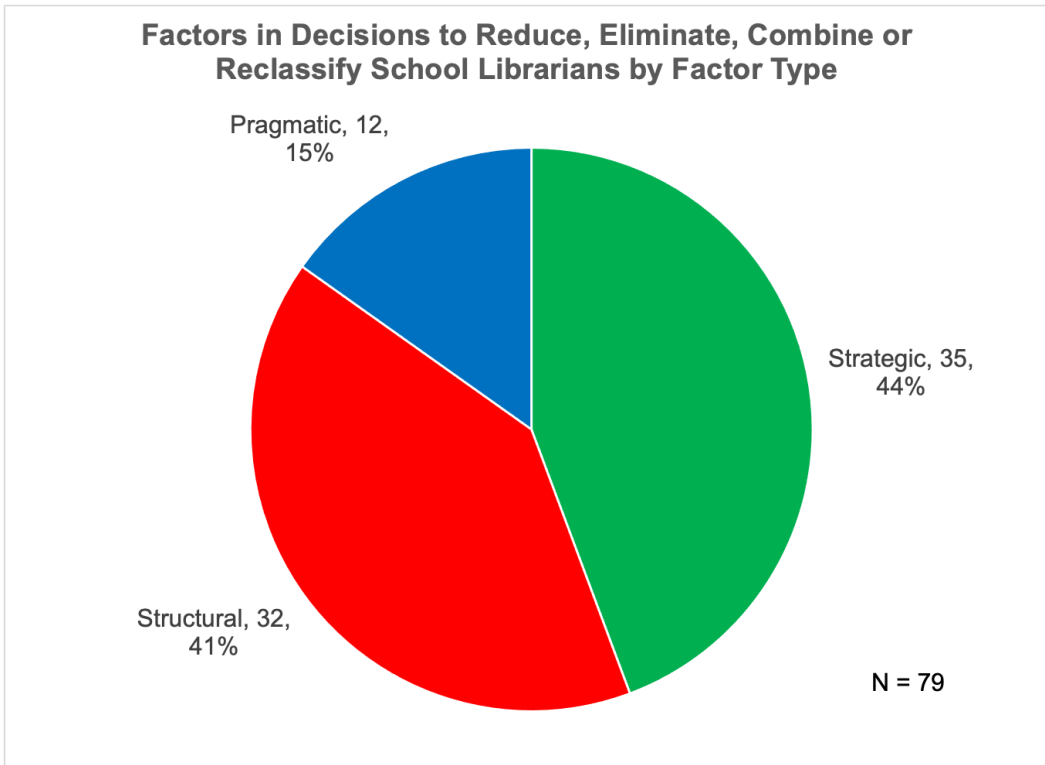


Chart 7.



Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Co-occurrence of Decision Factors

Whether interviewees decided to add or restore school librarians or to reduce, eliminate, combine, or reclassify them, the factors they identified as drivers of those decisions—and the concurrence of those factors with each other—shed new light on their decision-making processes. The complexity of these decisions is evident in the fact that 49 interviewees identified a total of 174 factors that influenced their decision-making.

Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore School Librarians

Of the many factors to which interviewees attributed decisions to add or restore school librarians, those most frequently mentioned included: making a change in priorities; stand-alone instruction by school librarians; equity of student access to staff; experiencing a change in administration; the closely inter-related factors of stand-alone instruction by librarians, planning time for teachers, and collaboration between librarians and teachers; and standards-based testing. For each of these factors, concurrent ones indicate more about the interviewee's thinking. (See Table 16.)

Change in Priorities

Not surprisingly, making a change in priorities, the broadest and most frequently-cited factor—mentioned by 13 of the 28 interviewees who added or restored librarians—concurred with:

- 2 structural factors:
 - new funding (mentioned by 6 interviewees) and
 - state government mandates (3).
- The lone pragmatic factor: providing planning time for teachers (4), and
- 4 other strategic factors:
 - equity of access to staff (7),
 - stand-alone instruction by a librarian (5),
 - a change of administration (4), and
 - collaboration between librarians and teachers (3).

These patterns suggest that several interviewees who decided to add or restore librarians prioritized more equitable student access to a librarian, availability of new funding, the instructional role of a librarian—independently, in collaboration with teachers, or both—or some combination of those three factors. Other interviewees were motivated to prioritize adding or restoring librarians by a change of administration, the existence of a state government mandate, or their intent to facilitate collaboration between librarians and teachers.

Stand-Alone Instruction by School Librarians

Of the 11 interviewees who attributed their decisions to add or restore librarians to the stand-alone instruction provided by librarians, six also cited concerns about equity of student access to staff, and five each also cited

Voices of Decision-Makers

How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

changing priorities, providing for planning time for teachers, and facilitating collaboration between librarians and teachers. Another concurrent factor for four of these 11 interviewees was new funding.

The concurrence of these factors suggests that interviewees who decided to add or restore librarians prioritized having more of them because of their understanding of the contributions librarians can make. Those contributions include collaborating with teachers on the design and delivery of instruction and ensuring that all students in their districts benefit equally from the presence of a librarian. And, in some cases, the availability of one or more new funding sources made possible the addition of more librarians for these and other reasons.

Equity of Student Access to Library Staff

Ten interviewees credited their decisions to add or restore librarians to a concern about ensuring equity of student access to staff. Concurrent factors with this equity factor included: making a change in priorities (mentioned by 7 interviewees), facilitating stand-alone instruction by school librarians (6), and availability of new funding sources (3). That these decision-making factors coincided suggests that a substantial block of interviewees who added or restored librarians believe that the presence of a librarian is an educational equity issue, at least in part because of the instruction librarians provide on their own. Not surprisingly, such decisions to add or restore librarians were made easier in some cases by the availability of new funding.

Availability of New Funding

Of the eight interviewees who cited availability of new funding as a structural factor in their decisions to add or restore librarians, three of them also cited state government mandates as another structural factor. In these cases, the availability of new sources of funding may have enabled a district to add librarian positions in order to comply with a state government mandate. New funding may have ranked higher due to an influx of federal pandemic relief funds known as the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (ARP ESSER) that became available during the time period of this study. (Funds must be spent by September 2024.) The ESSER legislation allocated approximately \$190 billion in aid to states and school districts (“Frequently Asked Questions,” 2021).

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 16. Co-occurrence of Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore Librarians

Factors	Structural				Pragmatic	Strategic								
	New funding	Opened new building/ enrollment increase	State government mandate	Grant/funding requirements	Planning time for teachers	Change in priorities	Stand-alone instruction	Equity of student access to staff	Change in administration	Collaborating with teachers	Standards-based testing	Addressing special student needs	Social/emotional learning	Strategic plan
<i>Structural</i>														
New funding	8													
Opened new building / enrollment increase	2	7												
State government mandate	3	1	4											
Grant/funding requirements	1	1	1	2										
<i>Pragmatic</i>														
Planning time for teachers	3	1	1	1	7									
<i>Strategic</i>														
Change in priorities	6	1	3	2	4	13								
Stand-alone instruction	4	2	0	0	5	5	11							
Equity of student access to staff	3	1	1	0	2	7	6	10						
Change in administration	2	2	2	1	0	4	0	2	9					
Collaborating with teachers	2	3	1	2	3	3	5	2	1	7				
Standards-based testing	1	1	0	0	2	1	2	1	2	1	4			
Addressing special student needs	1	2	0	0	2	1	2	1	0	1	2	3		
Social / emotional learning	2	0	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	
Strategic plan	1	0	0	0	2	1	2	2	0	2	0	0	1	2

Notes: Each bold number in the gray-shaded diagonal is the number of decisions in which that issue was a factor. Read to the left and down from that number to find all concurring factors. Lightest shades indicate co-occurrences of 0 to 2. Medium shades indicate co-occurrences of 3 to 4. And darkest shades indicate co-occurrences of 5 or greater. N = 28 decisions

Planning Time for Teachers, Librarian-Teacher Collaboration & Stand-Alone Instruction by Librarians

Seven interviewees attributed their decisions to add or restore librarians to providing for planning time for teachers. Seven also attributed their decisions to facilitating collaboration between librarians and teachers. Five mentioned prioritizing stand-alone instruction by librarians. For both teacher planning time and librarian-teacher collaboration, another coinciding factor for four interviewees was making a change in priorities. Another concurrent factor for providing planning time for teachers was gaining access to new funding (3 interviewees). And, for librarian-teacher collaboration, another concurrent factor was opening a new building or experiencing an enrollment increase (also 3

Voices of Decision-Makers

How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

interviewees.) Taken together, these inter-related factors suggest that the school leaders interviewed about adding or restoring librarians understood that librarians can play an instructional role, both in collaboration with classroom teachers and independently. In the latter case, leaders valued stand-alone instruction by librarians, whether delivered in the context of planning time for teachers or otherwise. Pointedly, most leaders perceived librarians teaching students in the library while teachers had planning time as a win-win schedule. None expressed or implied a perception of the librarian's role as "babysitting." Notably, though, their support for both this kind of scheduling and collaboration between librarians and teachers—which calls for teachers and librarians to plan together—is contradictory. The opportunity to add or restore librarians for these interviewees was variously associated with changed administrative priorities, availability of new funding, and opening of new schools or increases in enrollment—all factors that may make it easier for decision-makers to staff libraries to contribute to instruction.

Opened New Building / Increased Enrollment

Of the seven interviewees who explained their decisions to add or restore librarians to having opened a new school building or experienced an enrollment increase, three also cited the need for collaboration between librarians and teachers, while two also mentioned valuing the stand-alone instruction provided by librarians and their contribution to addressing special student needs. This factor was also associated with a change in administration, a likely coinciding event when a new school opens. When a school is opened or experiences an influx of new students—particularly when that coincides with the arrival of a new administrator—it is an opportunity for school leaders to prioritize librarians.

State Government Mandates

Of the four interviewees who attributed their decisions to add or restore librarians to state government mandates, three each also associated the decision with a change in priorities and the availability of new funding, and two also identified a change in administration as a contributing factor. When a new administrator arrives, it is probably not unusual for a district or school to review its compliance with state mandates. And, when that is done and it is found that a mandate is not being met, the availability of extra funds provides an opportunity to prioritize a staffing increase to meet the mandate.

Standards-Based Testing

Of interviewees who added or restored school librarians, only four indicated that their decisions were influenced by concern about standards-based testing. Interestingly, though these numbers are obviously small, two each also mentioned providing planning time for teachers, stand-alone instruction by librarians, addressed special student needs, and a change of administration. Notably, only one of these interviewees mentioned facilitating collaboration between librarians and teachers. This pattern of concurring factors suggests that school leaders—especially new ones—who are concerned about test scores may value stand-alone instruction by librarians. Such instruction

Voices of Decision-Makers

How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

simultaneously helps to free up planning time for teachers and gives librarians an opportunity to focus needed attention on students facing special challenges.

Factors in Decisions to Reduce, Eliminate, Combine or Reclassify School Librarians

Interviewees attributed their decisions to reduce, eliminate, combine, or reclassify school librarians to many factors. The most frequent structural factors were budget constraints, closing a building or experiencing enrollment decrease, and facing pipeline issues finding qualified candidates for librarian vacancies. The most frequent pragmatic factors were needing more teachers and needing the incumbent in another position. The most frequent strategic factors were change in priorities, choosing to hire other specialists or coaches, believing the position of librarian to be obsolete, and change in administration. For each of these factors, concurrent ones indicate more about the interviewee's thinking. (See Table 17.)

Budget Constraints

Whenever a school librarian position—or, indeed, any position—is under threat, the most predictable explanation usually offered is that it is a matter of budget constraints. As indicated by the other decision factors coinciding with that one, however, a district or school budget documents the priorities and perceptions of decision-makers. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the other factor coinciding most frequently with budget constraints was change in priorities. Eleven (11) of the 17 interviewees who attributed librarian cuts to budget constraints also cited priority changes. The next three most frequent factors coinciding with budget constraints were: hired other specialists or coaches (6), needed staff in another position (5, and 4 of those specifying the need for more teachers), and deemed the position of librarian obsolete (5). In fewer cases, attributing librarian cuts to budget constraints coincided with change in administration and “pipeline” issues finding qualified candidates for librarian vacancies (3 each).

Change in Priorities

Of the 12 interviewees who associated librarian cuts with a change in priorities, 11 also mentioned budget constraints, underscoring the earlier point about the most frequent factors coinciding with budget constraints. The kinds of priority changes most frequently mentioned were: hired other specialists or coaches (5), needed the incumbent in another position (4, of which 2 specified classroom teacher), and change in administration and position of librarian deemed obsolete (3 each).

Thus, when interviewees indicated that a change in priorities motivated their librarian cuts, the greater priorities—to the extent they were identified—tended to be preferences for hiring other specialists or coaches and other district or school positions (often classroom teachers). Notably, of interviewees whose change in priorities was hiring other types of educators, many believed librarians were obsolete. Librarian cuts attributed to priority changes also sometimes coincided with changes of district or school leadership—though, priority changes were more often not associated with such senior personnel changes.

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 17. Co-occurrence of Factors in Decisions to Reduce, Eliminate, Combine or Reclassify Librarians

Factors	Structural				Pragmatic		Strategic				
	Budget constraints	Closed building/ enrollment decrease	Pipeline issues finding qualified candidates	Retirements/ resignations	Needed incumbent in other position	Needed more teachers	Change in priorities	Hired other specialists/coaches	Position deemed obsolete	Change in administration	Strategic plan
<i>Structural</i>											
Budget constraints	17										
Closed bldg./enrollment decrease	2	6									
Pipeline issues finding qualified candidates	3	1	4								
Retirements/resignations	1	1	0	2							
<i>Pragmatic</i>											
Needed incumbent in other position	5	1	2	2	6						
Needed more teachers	4	2	1	1	2	5					
<i>Strategic</i>											
Change in priorities	11	1	2	1	4	1	12				
Hired other specialists/coaches	6	1	1	0	2	1	5	7			
Position deemed obsolete	5	2	2	0	3	1	3	3	6		
Change in administration	3	0	0	1	2	0	3	1	0	4	
Strategic plan	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

Notes: Each bold number in the gray-shaded diagonal is the number of decisions in which that issue was a factor. Read to the left and down from that number to find all concurring factors. Lightest shades indicate co-occurrences of 0 to 2. Medium shades indicate co-occurrences of 3 to 4. And darkest shades indicate co-occurrences of 5 or greater. N = 26 decisions

Hiring Other Specialists or Coaches

Of the seven interviewees who attributed their librarian cuts to choosing to hire other specialists or coaches, six also mentioned budget constraints, and three expressed a belief that school librarians were obsolete.

For these interviewees, the decision was probably a more clear-cut one. If money is tight, and you believe a certain position is needed, while another is obsolete, cutting the latter position is the obvious one to let go.

Closing Building/Enrollment Decrease

For most of the six interviewees who attributed librarian cuts to one or more buildings being closed or enrollment decreases, few, if any, concurrent factors were needed to explain their staffing decision. If a school building closed, obviously there was no longer a need for a librarian. If enrollment decreased, a budget cut (2) or need for more teachers elsewhere (2) might have provided some incentive for a librarian cut. And, if the decision-maker was

Voices of Decision-Makers

How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

already questioning whether the position of librarian might be obsolete (2), a building closure or drop in enrollment might suffice as a reason to cut a librarian job. Again, though, for most interviewees, this factor alone sufficed to justify librarian cuts.

Needed Incumbent in Other Position

Of the six interviewees who justified librarian cuts by the need to re-assign the incumbent to another position, five also cited budget constraints; four, a change in priorities; and three, the belief that the post of school librarian is obsolete. These concurring factors suggest that, when decision-makers believe money is tight, they have competing priorities, and they entertain doubts about the value of school librarianship, librarian cuts are anything but surprising.

Needed More Teachers

Of the five interviewees who cited the need for more teachers in explaining their librarian cuts, four also mentioned budget constraints—the single, most overwhelmingly concurrent factor in their decision-making. Most school leaders probably consider it a minimal expectation of their own performance to have a teacher in every classroom. It is difficult for a school librarian—or any other educator at district or school level who is based outside of a classroom—to compete with that overriding imperative.

Position of Librarian Obsolete

The most daunting threat to a school librarian's job is a school leader's belief that the position is obsolete. While there is an abundance of evidence with which to argue that such a belief is inaccurate, the fact remains that there are administrators at district and school levels who believe it. Of the 26 decisions to reduce, eliminate, combine, or reclassify school librarians, 6 of those decisions involved expressed such beliefs. Unsurprisingly, concurrent factors were budget constraints (5) as well as change in priorities, need to re-assign the incumbent to another position, and need to hire other specialists or coaches (3 each). Notably, however, none of these decisions involved re-assigning a librarian to classroom teaching or having difficulty filling vacancies after retirements or resignations. Those may be coincidental results of the small number of interviewees citing this factor. Or they may suggest that some administrators who question the need for school librarians also believe they need people in other positions (e.g., other specialists or coaches) than classroom teacher.

Change in Administration

Somewhat surprisingly, only four interviewees associated their librarian cuts with a change in administration. It is noteworthy that budget constraints and change in priorities were both identified as concurrent factors by three of the four. Two of these interviewees also mentioned the need to reassign a librarian to another position. Though the number of interviewees citing this factor was small, these coinciding factors are predictable issues that new administrators often face.

Voices of Decision-Makers

How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Difficulty Finding Qualified Candidates for Librarian Vacancies

Four interviewees attributed their losses of school librarians not to their own voluntary decisions to cut the positions, but to the difficulty of finding qualified candidates to fill vacancies. Isolated locale, a smaller community, a less diverse community, or a lower pay scale can make filling vacancies even more difficult. Consequently, librarian losses sometimes result from such involuntary factors, instead of a district or school leader's voluntary decision not to employ a librarian.

What Decision-Makers Said

One of the reasons interviews were deemed essential to this project was that school decision-makers' voices need to be heard. Summarizing their responses numerically, as done above, helps to assess overall trends; but, it can obscure substantive details worthy of attention. Further, references to specific circumstances and responses to them help to flesh out the numbers. To ensure confidentiality for interviewees and their districts or schools, the following quotes are paraphrased to eliminate identifying information, to simplify grammar, and to edit for conciseness and clarity.

Interviewees Who Added or Restored Librarians

Interviewees who added or restored librarians tended to explain their decision-making primarily in terms of strategic and structural factors. The strategic factors in their decisions to add or restore librarians included: accessing new funding sources, opening a new school, responding to an enrollment increase, meeting state government mandates, and finding grant funds. (See Table 18.)

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 18. Structural Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore Librarians

Decision-Making Factor	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
New funding: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds	Adding three certified library positions over the last few years was made possible by recent federal ESSER funds. It is important for administrators to braid together new sources, like ESSER, and core funds in order to make positive changes work long-term.
Opened new school building	With two new buildings opening, we'll be adding two more library media positions in the new school year.
Enrollment increase	As enrollment grew and classrooms were being added, we had a need for more time in the library.
State government mandate: Graduation requirements for educational technology	This district has expressed a commitment to support both media specialists and technology teachers. The state does not dictate staffing for library media positions; it is up to districts to determine.
State government mandate: Working toward a mandate	In the past, library positions were often traded out for reading specialists or classroom teachers. Now there is an amendment to make all library positions full-time and mandatory, requiring a master's in library science or education. Candidates for these positions are expected to complete appropriate coursework from an accredited library program, so they qualify for an additional certification.
Grant funding: scholarships	I applied for and received funding for multiple new hires to go to graduate school to earn their MLS degree and school library certification.

Pragmatic factors cited by those who added or restored librarians included facilitating planning time for teachers—in some cases, providing coverage while teachers planned in isolation; in other cases, planning collaboratively with teachers, especially when responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pandemic response efforts also included supporting students and parents during remote learning. (See Table 19.)

Table 19. Pragmatic Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore Librarians

Decision-Making Factor	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Planning time for teachers	Adding a librarian helped to fill out the “specials” rotation that facilitated our providing prep time to teachers. We wanted to provide consistent prep time for all teachers across all elementary schools.
Planning time for teachers: Part of broader COVID-19 pandemic response	Library media specialists were critical in helping the district pivot from in-person to fully remote and then hybrid because they worked continually with students, teachers, and parents. They also provided basic technical support to ensure that students were able to use technology for learning.

Most decisions to add or restore librarians were explained in terms of strategic considerations. These factors included: changes in priorities (e.g., becoming a 1-1 technology school), having librarians do more stand-alone instruction (e.g., critical thinking skills), addressing educational equity concerns (e.g., information literacy skills gaps), having librarians collaborate more with teachers (e.g., digital citizenship), and expanding their role in preparing students to meet state standards (e.g., digital literacy). (See Table 20.)

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 20. Strategic Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore Librarians

Decision-Making Factor	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Change in priorities: 1:1 Facilitating iPad/Chromebook initiative	Library media specialists led this initiative, including ensuring the devices were inventoried, adding them to the online catalog, and managing circulation of these assets.
Stand-alone instruction: 1-1 device-specific digital citizenship instruction	Librarians implemented digital citizenship instruction at the beginning of the year, so all students received instruction specific to the type of device they received.
Stand-alone instruction: Increasing library instruction	Use of the library was transformed. Before, staff checked things in and out and did read alouds. Now, there is a librarian to teach digital literacy and research techniques as well as integrate information resources with content areas.
Stand-alone instruction: Information literacy skills	Librarians bring to the table more than circulating books: information evaluation skills are needed and they are the ones who teach them.
Stand-alone instruction: Need for certified professional to teach	Before retiring, she made a pitch to me about why her position should be retained as a certified role. When it was time to hire, I emphasized to the superintendent and HR that we needed to hire someone with certification, not a paraprofessional.
Equity of student access to library staff: Critical thinking skills	Assessment is a key piece because when you're trying to get approval for more positions, you have to have a compelling argument. "This helps critical thinking skills" isn't enough; it has to be "some of our students don't have any of these skills."
Equity of student access to library staff: Low-income students	Librarians are resourceful people. They help provide a high-quality education—especially for low-income students—by collaborating with teachers and helping them source information for their classrooms. They make learning fun and interesting.
Collaborating with teachers: Digital literacy needs	Librarians worked with teachers to develop the digital citizenship curriculum; so the increase in staffing didn't happen because of the library, it happened because of technology.
Standards-based testing: Added responsibilities	The librarians have more time with students to teach library as well as digital literacy standards.
Social / emotional learning	Our counselor and librarian implement our social-emotional curriculum. There's some co-teaching, so they work closely together.
Strategic plan	Teachers expressed the need for a librarian during the district's annual review and improvement process.

Interviewees Who Reduced Librarians

Interviewees who reduced librarians explained their decisions in terms of a variety of structural, pragmatic, and strategic factors. Structural factors in these decisions included budget constraints, closure of school buildings, and enrollment decreases that activated district staffing formulas. (See Table 21.)

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 21. Structural Factors in Decisions to Reduce Librarians

Decision-Making Factor	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Budget constraints	If the principals' budgets were cut, the end result was that the library positions were cut. Certified librarians were replaced with paraprofessionals and recently-built schools haven't included school library facilities because there is no need to manage them.
Closed school building	Staffing for libraries is codified into state law; but, many schools in this district are either closing or consolidating.
Enrollment decrease	In smaller schools, principals have begun to combine the school librarian position with the computer teacher. Realistically, students in buildings with smaller enrollments are getting only half-time library instruction—half of what the larger schools with full-time librarians are getting.

Pragmatic factors influencing librarian reductions included needing staff in other positions, particularly ones addressing post-pandemic skill loss, and needing more classroom teachers. Sometimes these decisions resulted in librarians having their responsibilities split between the library and a classroom, and, in other cases, they were reassigned to classrooms altogether. (See Table 22.)

Table 22. Pragmatic Factors in Decisions to Reduce Librarians

Decision-Making Factor	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Needed staff in other positions: Interventionists for post-pandemic skill loss	I couldn't cut interventionists, because data showed students, especially after the pandemic, weren't learning virtually. I knew the interventionists would need to do as much catch-up work with those students as possible; so, I had to cut librarian positions.
Needed more teachers: librarian's time split between library and classroom	Instead of cutting positions entirely, our media center specialist has taught one or two classes in a split model; half her day being working in the library, making sure the resources are there, making sure everything's where it needs to be, and the other half teaching English
Needed incumbent in other position: technology teacher	With a teacher shortage, they didn't have enough teachers when school started; so, the librarians were told to teach technology classes.

Strategic factors driving librarian cuts included hiring new educational technology staff, administrator perceptions that—if the position of librarian was not obsolete—it was at least less needed than in the past, and the pressure on districts and schools to improve their students' test scores. (See Table 23.)

Voices of Decision-Makers

How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 23. Strategic Factors in Decisions to Reduce Librarians

Decision-Making Factor	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Hired other specialists / coaches: New tech staff added, librarians reduced	Media services were brought under the Technology department. As part of re-alignment, library staffing was reduced and new technology positions were added.
Hired other specialists / coaches: Teachers asked for more ed-tech staff	Library paraprofessionals were decreased and educational technology paraprofessionals were hired to provide teachers with more collaboration time and add a new experience for the students.
Position deemed obsolete: Teachers need less support from librarians	Demand for library spaces and librarian expertise has been declining. Circulation of library materials was falling, and librarians were spending less time teaching students and collaborating or supporting their classroom colleagues. That was not their fault: teachers have become more comfortable working with online resources and databases. These usage trends led us to cut one librarian and have the other split her time between two schools.
Position deemed obsolete: Aides needed more than librarians	When our librarians received multiple teacher requests to collaborate, they began declining some, explaining that one of them had to remain in the library for “crowd control.” So, we went from 2 professional staff to 1. Our current librarian is no longer tethered to the library as a space manager. Two teacher aides took over managing the space. On paper, it looks like we cut a librarian; but, in truth, we’re able to fully maximize one person, sometimes more than when there were 2 librarians.
Standardized testing: Librarians sacrificed for more intensive test prep	The pressure to improve standardized test scores left principals in a pickle. At schools with lowest enrollment, lowest socio-economic students, and most pressure to deliver on test scores, they decided they couldn’t afford to have librarians anymore. They had to focus on preparing students for state tests.

Interviewees Who Eliminated Librarians

Interviewees who chose to eliminate school librarians completely felt compelled to do so by structural forces beyond their control. The opening of charter schools resulted in losses of both enrollment and funding for regular public schools (losses that sometimes activated staffing formulas). Small schools had insufficient economies of scale to justify continuing the position. And some districts and schools—particularly ones in isolated locales—had difficulties finding qualified candidates for librarian jobs, often exacerbated by retirements. (See Table 24.)

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 24. Structural Factors in Decisions to Eliminate Librarians

Decision-Making Factor	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Budget constraints: Budget cuts due to charter school	The district had a charter school open and, unfortunately, its drain on enrollments of regular public schools negatively impacted their funding.
Budget constraints: Mandated positions prevail	Many principals don't want to cut librarians; but, when you have a limited budget, the most expensive thing is personnel, and, if another position is mandated, it forces the issue.
Enrollment decrease: Loss of students to charter school	The largest charter school in the state is getting some of our students. That impacts enrollment and funding for regular public schools, and costs us staff.
Enrollment decrease: Economy of scale	One thing you're looking at is how many students are my staff reaching each day? Say I have a librarian and they're only getting 15 kids a day. If I assign them as a teacher, suddenly they've got three more classes of 25. It's a small school; I don't have the economy of scale that a school of 600 or 2000 would have.
Issues finding qualified job candidates: Filled alternate position	We did attempt to hire a librarian; but, were unsuccessful. When we couldn't find one, we opted for hiring a reading specialist instead. It was who we could get.
Issues finding qualified job candidates: Need leadership of strong "21 st century" librarian	If I were to add someone right now, I would need somebody really strong, someone with a vision of what the library could be. Our current librarian operates an old-fashioned library—the kind I had growing up in the '70s and '80s. We need somebody more up-to-date; a 21 st century librarian who has vision and leadership skills.
Retirements	In fall of 2020, one of the two librarians retired and her position was not replaced.

The prevailing pragmatic motivation for eliminating a librarian position was needing staff in other positions (e.g., reading specialist, counselor). In some cases, librarians were re-assigned to other positions rather than laid off. (See Table 25.)

Table 25. Pragmatic Factors in Decisions to Eliminate Librarians

Decision-Making Factor	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Needed incumbent in other position: Shifted librarian to reading specialist	All librarian positions were furloughed; one became a reading specialist, because she had both certifications.
Needed staff in other positions: Eliminated librarian to hire COVID-era counselor	We needed to address homelessness by hiring another counselor. Also, during COVID, we had to save some money and, with kids not in school, we didn't need a librarian. Mental health support was vital. We had to make the new counseling position full-time. It's difficult to hire a half-time counselor. People want a full-time job, so they can receive benefits.

Other interviewees who eliminated librarians altogether cited strategic factors, such as a change in priorities (e.g., keeping kindergarten full-day, hiring STEM teachers) and pressures associated with standards-based testing (i.e., hiring more teachers of tested subjects. (See Table 26.)

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 26. Strategic Factors in Decisions to Eliminate Librarians

Decision-Making Factor	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Change in priorities: Kindergarten and STEM	The district kept kindergarten a full-day program—rather than cutting it to half-day—instead of restoring librarian positions. When more funds became available, a STEM teacher was hired rather than a librarian.
Change in priorities: STEM	One of our elementary schools did not have a STEM teacher, and given that we're a 1:1 district now, that was seen as a higher priority than keeping a librarian.
Standards-based testing	Unfortunately, if I have to make a decision between library and math or language arts, those are tested areas. That's why I had to cut a librarian position.

Interviewees Who Combined or Reclassified Librarians

Librarian full-time equivalents (FTEs) do not decline only because decision-makers choose to reduce their hours or eliminate their positions completely. Sometimes, losses of librarian FTEs result from the position being combined with another (e.g., librarian/educational technology specialist) or reclassified in ways that may involve new job titles unrecognized as librarians (e.g., information literacy/educational technology specialist). Decisions to combine librarian positions with others or reclassify them under new titles tended to be explained mostly in terms of structural and strategic factors.

Structural factors that drove combining or reclassifying librarians included budget constraints (most notably, due to fiscal pressures from charter schools), difficulties finding qualified candidates for librarian vacancies (sometimes associated with district or school locale or cost-of-living issues), and the need to meet certain standards. (See Table 27.)

Pragmatic factors that influenced decisions to combine or reclassify librarian positions included needing more teachers to reduce class size and needing specialists to address specific academic needs (e.g., reading). (See Table 28.)

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 27. Structural Factors in Decisions to Combine or Reclassify Librarians

Decision-Making Factor	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Budget constraints: Charter schools mean cuts at regular schools	We serve a lot of marginalized populations. Schools of choice have been devastating to this community. Of our thousands of school-age children, only half attend regular public schools. Consequently, the district is strapped financially. During the COVID years, we cut our full-time library positions to half-time, because we didn't have a lot of library use then.
Budget constraints: cost-of-living raises vs. adding staff	When you don't get funding increases and you're trying to give teachers a cost-of-living raise, sometimes you've got to do what you've got to do. You give the raise, and combine staff responsibilities to avoid increasing the payroll.
Issues finding qualified job candidates: High cost-of-living discourages applicants	We have a housing crisis. There's not enough affordable housing near our schools. We advertise for a certified library media specialist, and candidates got excited because of how much we pay. Then, they discover they can't find a place to live. So, we end up having to add library duties to another position.
Legislative standards	You get more points on our standards for having highly qualified teachers and librarians. Sometimes, you can get credit for both by combining positions.

Table 28. Pragmatic Factors in Decisions to Combine or Reclassify Librarians

Decision-Making Factor	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Needed more teachers Needed incumbent in other position	Ask a principal, would you rather have smaller class sizes, a reading specialist, or a library media specialist? They're going to choose one of those over a library media specialist.
Needed more teachers	To avoid cutting positions entirely, we decided to split some educator roles. The middle school librarian's job was split between the library and an English classroom. Our librarian is a certified English teacher, too; so half her day is in the library, and the other half is teaching English.
Needed incumbent in other position	At the elementary level, the librarian's day is split. Part of her day is spent teaching in the elementary school library. The other part of her day, she serves as a basic skills [i.e., reading and math] specialist, visiting classrooms, mostly in our kindergarten or first grade classes. Due to class sizes and basic skills instruction needs, that extra help is needed by classroom teachers.

Decisions to combine or reclassify librarian positions were also tied to specific strategic concerns, such as changing priorities to address local conditions or to fulfill a particular vision, as well as updating the responsibilities of school librarians to meet current needs. (See Table 29.)

Voices of Decision-Makers

How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 29. Strategic Factors in Decisions to Combine or Reclassify Librarians

Decision-Making Factor	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Change in priorities: One district librarian oversees aides in schools	We opted for one librarian for the district, overseeing an aide in each school. Is it ideal? No, but we have great people doing the work. When you're making these decisions, you have to take into account all the constraining realities and determine how to achieve goals most efficiently. You start looking at who is certified, and decide how to better utilize staff so they are working smarter and not harder.
Change in priorities: Future-ready makerspace	As a principal you can choose to have a librarian or another teacher. A lot of schools in the district got rid of the librarians. Those principals were not thinking about what the library of the future can provide students. We redesigned the whole approach and call it a future ready library, a huge makerspace combining everything together.
Position deemed obsolete: Librarian responsibilities need updating	The responsibilities for secondary librarians need to be changed and updated to be more consistent with what students need and expect today. Some librarians have not kept up to date, and some just want it the way it used to be. The job needs to be reconceived, and filled appropriately.

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Tradeoffs / Advantages & Disadvantages of Decisions

When district or school leaders make decisions to add or restore librarians or to reduce, eliminate, combine, or reclassify them, those decisions are not made in isolation. The implications for other staffing decisions and for other consequences for the district, schools, and students have to be taken into account. Sometimes, new funding or other fortuitous turns of events make it possible to add library staff without sacrificing staff elsewhere. In such times, the impetus for the decision may be the perceived advantage to be gained. Other times, in more challenging circumstances, there is no good or right decision, because the leader knows that whatever decision they make, it is likely to do harm. The best they can do is try to minimize the damage. Sometimes, it is not a matter of choosing one position over another; but, of having to make a cut without any compensatory gain.

Win-Lose Tradeoffs

One type of scenario interviewees described was a win-lose tradeoff, gaining librarians while cutting elsewhere to pay for them. Some interviewees described staff-for-staff tradeoffs in which librarians were chosen over other types of staff, such as classroom teachers and counselors. Other interviewees reported adding a librarian rather than a teacher, even when it meant larger class sizes, or adding a librarian to ensure that teachers had planning time. Notably, the latter was such an absolute commitment that the interviewer noted that cuts had to be made elsewhere. (See Table 30.)

Table 30. Win-Lose Tradeoffs of Adding or Restoring Librarians

Tradeoff	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Added staff / Lost staff: Recruiting best teachers to become librarians	We will pull the best teachers, train them and send them to school to get their library credential. The challenge: making sure we don't take too much from the classroom environment, given teacher shortages.
Added staff / Lost staff: Gaining librarians meant losing counselors	The tradeoff was not getting elementary school counselors. I was able to get secondary school counselors, but I would have liked to have them at every level—pre-school, all the way up through grade 12. We just couldn't afford the elementary counselors, because I wasn't willing to give up the librarians.
Added staff / Lost staff Added staff / Lost elsewhere: Larger class sizes	For many of our principals, taking on another certified person—a librarian—meant giving up a certified person somewhere else. So, the tradeoff was having larger class sizes in one grade to add another media specialist. There was no extra money to have both.
Added staff / Lost elsewhere: priority to give teachers planning time	We add librarians when necessary because they enable us to provide planning time for our classroom teachers. Reducing the number of librarians is not an option. Cuts have to be made elsewhere.

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Win-Win Advantages

Some interviewees reported that their decisions to add or restore librarians were win-win scenarios, in which the decision was made due to the anticipated benefits of the new positions rather than their preference over kinds of other staff. In some cases, circumstances permitted adding librarians without making staff cuts elsewhere. In other cases, adding librarians was chosen for the anticipated advantages of increased collaboration between librarians and teachers, more stand-alone instruction by librarians, more support for teachers from librarians, and improved utility of library space. (See Table 31.)

Table 31. Win-Win Advantages of Adding or Restoring Librarians

Advantage	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Added librarian / No other staff loss	The success of adding staff did not come at the expense of other positions in the district. We were able to add staff thanks to a highly collaborative Director of Technology and Library Media Director working together. They negotiated something that would work for both of them.
Added librarian / Gained more collaboration between librarian and teachers	Teachers who want a co-teaching partner no longer have to worry about whether or not the librarian will be in their building on a particular day. Professional teacher librarians set a different tone than the paraprofessionals principals used to cover lunch duty or other assignments.
Added librarian / Gained more stand-alone instruction by librarians	Adding a librarian gave teachers one more planning period a week.
Added librarian / Gained more teacher support by librarians	Our principals don't ask to exchange their librarian for another classroom teacher. Those conversations are non-existent. They understand that their librarian supports teachers in ways that have positive impacts on student achievement.
Added librarian / Increased utility of library space	A new librarian became the person to put into practice our makerspace / technology / hands-on learning space. This supported what students were learning in the classroom and vice-versa.

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Lose-Win Trade-Offs

A common lose-win scenario when school librarian positions are lost is when district or school leaders choose to sacrifice a librarian position for another, most often a classroom teacher position. In other cases, a librarian position—and, indeed, the library itself—may be sacrificed in order to use library space differently. (See Table 32.)

Table 32. Lose-Win Tradeoffs of Reducing, Eliminating, Combining or Reclassifying Librarians

Tradeoff	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Lost librarian / Gained teacher	It's hard to keep an adult in the library when a group of children doesn't have a second-grade teacher. When you're not directly responsible for kids, a lot of people wonder what you do all day.
Lost librarian / Gained other staff: gained technology integrationists	While we lost librarian expertise, we gained by hiring technology integrationists who already had great relationships with teachers. There was a huge infusion of new energy and skills around instructional technology, and the district saved money.
Lost librarian / Gained more classroom space	In addition to losing librarian time, our high school is so crowded, we had to take part of the library for classrooms, leaving less space for books.
Lost librarian / Gained more classroom space	Space was a tradeoff. Our library is more of a classroom space now. So, we had to remove a lot of books. High school kids don't check out books like they used to--they all have MacBooks. The way our high school is headed, we will have hardly any books.

Lose-Lose Disadvantages

Many interviewees who reported making negative decisions about school librarian staffing acknowledged the negative consequences of those decisions for both students and teachers. Sometimes, district or school leaders feel they have no other choice, even though they know that cutting a librarian position—perhaps the last one in a district or school—will have undesirable consequences. They know that such cuts mean less collaboration between librarians and teachers, less stand-alone instruction by librarians, less support for teachers from librarians, and less worthwhile use of library space. (See Table 33.)

Voices of Decision-Makers

How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 33. Lose-Lose Disadvantages of Eliminating, Reducing, Combining or Reclassifying Librarians

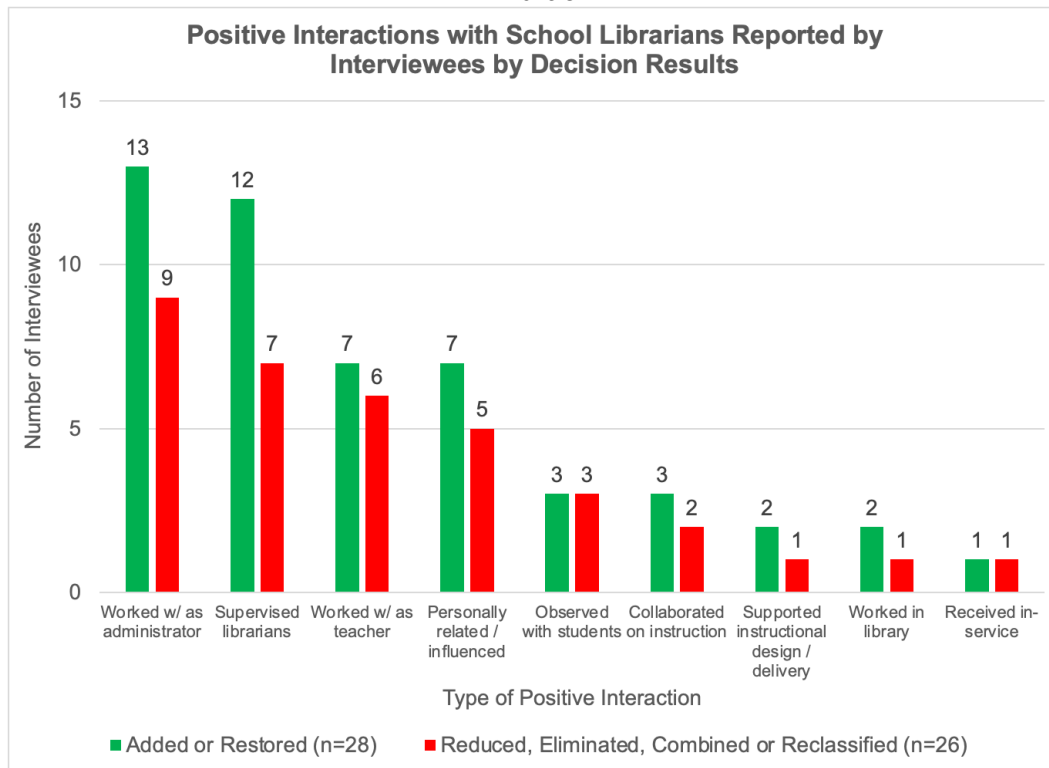
Disadvantage	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Lost librarian / Students suffered: State requirements forced choice	As an administrator, a one-time classroom teacher, and even a parent, I know how important it is to have a strong school library and librarian. But, in our state, other positions are required, while a librarian is not. It is frustrating to feel little choice but to take something away from our kids that I know will harm their academic growth.
Lost librarian / Students suffered: Reading scores suffer as circulation shifts from print to digital	The downside is a lack of equity and access. District staff can't cover for every librarian who has been cut. Students not doing as well in reading is the biggest learning impact. Where librarians have been lost, print circulation has declined, while digital information use has surged.
Lost librarian / Lost collaboration between librarian and teachers: Future administrators may devalue understaffed libraries	When we lose librarians, it's more than just an immediate loss for one school or district; it's a potential long-term loss. Many teachers are going to move on into administrative roles. Then, they're going to make decisions based on their recollection of a lone librarian who couldn't collaborate with teachers because she didn't have a library assistant.
Lost librarian / Lost collaboration with teachers: Resource curation now focus	Our reduction in librarian FTE took time away from our media specialist's co-teaching role. Teachers used to bring classes to the library for the librarian's help with research projects, and we can't do that at the same level now. All she has time to do is build resources instead of collaborate with teachers.
Lost librarian / Lost stand-alone instruction: Teaching information literacy suffers	Our teachers have classroom libraries; but, that's nothing compared to having a librarian in a library—with so many more options—helping students understand how to verify and analyze sources. Some of that happens in our English classrooms; but, this loss definitely has had a negative impact on our district and its students.
Lost librarian / Lost stand-alone instruction: Aides can't replace librarians	Our former librarian could help our kids in ways the aide there now cannot. All the aide can cover is more rudimentary things, such as the basics of locating resources.
Lost librarian / Lost stand-alone instruction: Critical thinking suffers	Critical thinking suffered when we decreased our investments in library services.
Lost librarian / Lost support of teachers by librarian: Lost technology integration	We need someone who understands how to integrate technology into classroom instruction, and who can co-teach with, and provide professional development for, teachers. Teachers need help in using different platforms in their classrooms. Not having that person has been tough.
Lost librarian / Lost utility of library space: Student workers insufficient	I wanted the kids reading as much as possible. With no librarian or even an aide, two students were checking out books, but nobody was getting them back in order on the shelves. Let alone anything else. It wasn't good.

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Interactions of Interviewees with Librarians

Observers of school leaders’ decisions about school librarian employment may question what kind of interactions those leaders are having, or have had, with librarians and how—whether positive or negative—that affects their decision-making. Interestingly, both leaders who added or restored librarians and those who reduced, eliminated, combined, or reclassified them shared similar kinds of positive interactions with librarians. Notably, though, substantially more leaders who made positive decisions about librarians reported having worked with them as administrators, particularly in a supervisory capacity. Noticeably fewer leaders who made negative decisions about librarians reported similar positive interactions. Beyond that, while the numbers reporting other kinds of experiences were only in single digits, there were no other major differences between positive and negative decision-makers in the numbers of interviewees reporting most other kinds of interactions with librarians. That included such positive interactions as: observing their interactions with students, collaborating with them on instructional design and delivery, receiving instruction support from them, and having received in-service from them. (See Chart 8.)

Chart 8.



Voices of Decision-Makers

How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Most decision-makers' accounts of positive interactions with librarians were divided easily between experiences they had as administrators and those they had as teachers. As administrators, many interviewees had either worked with librarians previously in an administrative role or supervised them. And, at least one received in-service professional development from a team of librarians when entering a new administrator role. School leaders who had worked with librarians previously as classroom teachers reported a range of experiences: collaborating with librarians on design and delivery of instruction, receiving support from librarians for their own design and delivery of instruction, observing students' library use, actually working in a library themselves, and receiving in-service professional development from librarians. The district and school leaders interviewed described a wide variety of examples of these formative experiences with their librarian colleagues. Notably, this was probably the easiest question for practically all of the interviewees to answer—for good or ill, they all had personal experiences with librarians to share. Interestingly, it does not appear that any of the interviewees had come to their current administrator role without any previous experience of school librarians. Perhaps that biased the interviewees to volunteer to be interviewed, or perhaps it suggests that most administrators are not as inexperienced at working with librarians as many suspect. Some interviewees were candid about their negative perceptions of, and experiences with, librarians.

Positive Interactions as Administrators with Librarians

Interviewees who reported having positive interactions as administrators with librarians clearly valued the impact that a highly effective school librarian can have on the whole educational eco-system. They recounted how administrators, teachers, librarians, and students worked together. They credited library spaces coming alive under the leadership of an excellent librarian. They described how a skilled librarian can help a school negotiate controversy when library materials are challenged. And they explained how the best school librarians helped them as new administrators and their fellow librarians make the most of library programs. (See Table 34.)

Voices of Decision-Makers

How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 34. Positive Interactions of Interviewees as Administrators with Librarians

Type of Interaction	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Worked with as district/school administrator: Resource for students, teachers and administrators	As an administrator, I've witnessed a media specialist being a force for positivity. A principal in a school I was working with started to realize that the media specialist wasn't just an extra resource for teachers and students, but also an extra resource for the principal. The principal realized that the media specialist was truly a leader in that building—someone who talked regularly with and influenced all of its teachers.
Worked with as district/school administrator: Library as collaborative learning space	I've had a lot of opportunities to work with librarians. To be in those spaces, and to see how students use them—both well and not-so-well—helped drive what I think a library should look like. A library is a community space where you can bring people together. It impacts the school climate, particularly collaboration. We want to bring the whole community to it. We want to use it as a model of what education can be like.
Worked with as district/school administrator: Book challenge	There was a book on one of our reading lists that some parents thought controversial. Our librarian was integral to the conversations about how you choose a book with your child, and why these books are published. Kids need to see themselves in different types of literature. Her expertise needed to be there. Your library becomes a living place instead of a book repository because of that person.
Worked with as district/school administrator: Exemplary librarians	As a vice principal and principal, I worked closely with some phenomenal librarians. They helped me learn what to look for when hiring a librarian. They knew how to engage kids—whether through encouraging them to read books or teaching them how to access information via technology. I want all of our kids to know the excitement of being able to access knowledge that's beyond their usual sphere.
Supervised: Librarians who make the most of library space	When I supervised librarians, I saw the power of these large, beautiful spaces where kids can find quiet time for learning, for getting lost in books, and for creating. Every school should have someone to provide those opportunities to our children.
Supervised: Elevating learning across the board	I just completed a unit observation with the library media specialist, watching our 2 nd grade students get excited about coding. Only 7 or 8 years old, they learned terms like algorithm! Whatever the topic, the library media specialist is elevating student learning, helping them learn concepts that are going to help them in math, science and other classes. I think it's a huge success.
Received in-service from: Learning as new administrator	As a new district administrator, I had a couple of veteran librarians pull me aside and say: "We are going to teach you what we do." They were great role models of effective school librarianship to their principals. It really helped.
Received in-service from: Learning as new district library leader	I was part of the LILEAD fellowship. There's not a lot of support in the library community for district library leaders to learn how to make a difference. That experience gave me the chance to learn from other districts and make powerful connections.
Worked in a library	I put myself through college as a public library clerk. Today, of course, my school library looks dramatically different. Then, people called us to settle bar bets that they can now settle themselves by consulting Google on their smartphones. Still, I always encourage teachers who show any interest to get their library science endorsement. I truly believe that, despite all the changes, what our school librarians do is important.

Voices of Decision-Makers
How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Positive Interactions as Teachers with Librarians

Interviewees who had positive personal experiences as teachers with librarians were equally clear about how much they valued highly effective librarians as collaborators and supporters. They especially noted the contributions librarians often make to ensuring educational equity, particularly for students requiring extra attention. In at least one case, this was an “echo” of the administrator’s own under-privileged-childhood experiences with libraries and librarians. (See Table 35.)

Table 35. Positive Interactions of Interviewees as Teachers with Librarians

Type of Interaction	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Worked with as classroom teacher: Librarian as information-seeking support system	I marvel at our librarian’s ability to shift from the needs of one student or group of students to another. One minute, a group of students needs help starting the research process; the next minute, it’s an individual wanting help finding detailed information about bio-medical research; and, the minute after that, it’s another student wondering what to wear to prom. When I see so many kids in a library, I know we have the right person in that job; they are being a resource, a support system those kids truly need.
Worked with as classroom teacher: Librarian as literacy-gap closer	When I started teaching, it was the certified high school librarian who convinced me that it’s our role to create opportunities to close the literacy gap. She really opened my eyes.
Personally related to or influenced by: Childhood library experiences	When I was growing up, my parents taking me to the library was a big deal. We didn’t have a lot of books at our house; so, getting to go to the library and check out books—so varied in topics and depth—was exciting. As a teacher, I brought that love of libraries to my relationship with my librarian.
Observed students’ library use: Own children	My children are in the school system right now and every week, when they come home from their library, they have a new book. I see the excitement on their faces: “Look, I brought home a new book ... we need to read this!” So, I understand the value of a strong library program, not just from a teacher’s perspective, but as a parent. It means a lot to my kids—and all kids—to have access to a well-managed library in their school. They are able to find more and newer books that interest to them than they would have access to otherwise.
Collaborated with me/my teachers on design/delivery of instruction: Tag-team teaching and troubleshooting	My librarian and I usually partnered on teaching research assignments, each teaching different things. When I was Battle of the Books sponsor, my librarian helped me coach the kids. She also made sure that we had access to needed books. Anytime I noticed kids struggling, I’d say “Hey, can you help me with this?” And I knew she would.
Supported my/my teachers’ design/delivery of instruction: Love of reading as foundation of learning	As a kindergarten teacher, I had students who loved going to the library, especially bringing back that first book. They were so excited. The role of librarians is to see students, spend time with them, and foster a love of reading.

Negative Interactions as Administrators with Librarians

Only 12 of the 49 interviewees reported negative interactions with librarians. These decision-makers were candid that, while the position of school librarian is a valuable one, its value can be undercut dramatically by simply having the wrong person in the job. Others acknowledged that their negative perceptions of school librarians could be

Voices of Decision-Makers

How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

traced to a variety of related factors. Some acknowledged that a generally poor school climate contributed to their negative experiences. Others attributed their experiences to unqualified staff being assigned to work as librarians. Still others described lack of consensus about the school librarian’s role, outright bad hiring decisions, and librarian burnout. Perhaps most notably, negative interactions were associated with the failure of educator preparation programs to teach prospective administrators and teachers about school libraries and librarians. (See Table 36.)

Table 36. Negative Interactions of Interviewees as Administrators with Librarians

Type of Interaction	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Worked with as district/school administrator: good and bad librarians make lasting impressions	I've seen good librarians and bad ones. The ones that don't do a good job leave a bad taste in people's mouths. When administrators and teachers have bad experiences with folks like that, it can influence their perceptions for a long time.
Worked with as district/school administrator	We have focused on re-educating our librarians, because some are curmudgeons who are set in their ways. We've had to bring those librarians along.
Supervised: Ed-tech staff outperformed librarians at teaching digital literacy	Digital literacy is taught by our tech integrationist and digital citizenship, by the librarian. I have a huge amount of appreciation for the tech integrationists, who I feel are a step closer to the classroom in terms of working with teachers on a daily basis. Part of what happened is a move from centralized information to de-centralized information, changing how students access primary sources and research materials. It doesn't require a field trip to the media center any longer. We are following the natural trend from one center of information to everyone holding that power.
Supervised: Unqualified paraprofessional overwhelmed	When I was a principal, I had a paraprofessional who acted as the librarian. She was always griping about how the kids left the library so messy. They were always messing up her books.
Supervised: Librarians difficult and ineffective	The librarians were really difficult to manage and supervise. The personality and style of the librarian has a lot to do with the level of support within the building for that individual. We had a librarian in an elementary school who was a pain to deal with. The rest of the staff were worn out by it. Teachers delivered students to the library and left. At middle and high school levels, it was even worse. Our previous high school librarian had been there for a long time. Teachers didn't want to collaborate with her; they didn't even want to take their classes to the library. So, the library was empty all the time, and there were books on the shelves that students weren't reading. The personality of the individual in this position is critical.
Received in-service from: Gap in administrator preparation	Administrators have to learn about libraries and librarians on the job, whether formally or informally. They don't get any training in academic classes on the impact of libraries and librarians on learning. That's something that needs to start happening at the university level.

Interviewees who referenced negative experiences with librarians as teachers echoed those referencing administrator experiences. (See Table 37.)

Voices of Decision-Makers

How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment

Table 37. Negative Interactions of Interviewees as Teachers with Librarians

Type of Interaction	Examples / Quotes from Interviewees
Worked with as classroom teacher: Witnessed teacher hostility to working with librarian	When I taught, some of my teacher colleagues were very defensive of their turf. They didn't want anyone else interjecting themselves into their classrooms. They didn't want to work with the librarian at all.
Worked with as classroom teacher: Early teacher perception of librarian as easier job	When I taught in a classroom, I always thought librarian was the best gig in the world—you just sat there and read to kids. You probably even got a helper.
Personally related to or influenced by	The librarians I know love to curl up with a great book. I love to read, too. I like reading an e-book, listening to an audio book, and holding a physical book. I like reading an actual newspaper; but, I also don't mind reading it online. I've had to learn. Some librarians are stuck in "curl up with a good book" mode--and there's just no space for that in our schools anymore.
No librarian support for teachers on design/delivery of instruction: invisible librarian	A librarian just does a minimal job: checks out books, does library orientation, punches the clock, and leaves. As a result, in that school, the librarian is invisible, and the value of the library program is diminished. Is it any surprise when an administrator asks, why do we need it?
No support for teachers' design/delivery of instruction: Comparing current school to previous one	My current school does not compare well with my last one, which is a 21 st century learning school. At the previous school, technology is better integrated into instruction. It isn't about Apple TVs, iPads, etc.; it's about a school culture that facilitates collaborative learning. That's not happening yet at my current school.
No quality in-service: Some librarians out of touch	Theoretically, librarians should be instructional coaches, although I would argue that, in my experience, many librarians wouldn't be comfortable doing that. They've been removed from the classroom for too long.

Surprisingly, seven of these 12 interviewees decided to add or restore school librarians, despite reporting negative interactions with them. Many of their negative experiences became learning opportunities that enabled them to have more positive, subsequent experiences with librarians. From negative experiences, they learned what they did not want in a librarian, and that affected their hiring of librarians in the future.