

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

Table of Contents

	Page
Executive Summary _____	vii
Introduction _____	1
Literature Review _____	3
Perceptions of School Librarians by School Administrators _____	3
Funding and School Budgets _____	5
Unpredictable Changes in Leadership _____	7
Staffing Mandates and State Adopted Information Curricula _____	7
Recent Challenges _____	9
Summary _____	10
Methodology _____	12
Theoretical Perspective: Evolutionary Organizational Theory _____	12
Research Questions _____	12
Selection, Recruitment, and Scheduling of Interviews _____	13
Interview Questions _____	14
Reflexive Thematic Analysis _____	15
Deductive Latent Coding Orientation _____	15
Coding Process _____	16
Formal/Informal Instruction Provided _____	16
Staff Providing Instruction _____	16
Nature of Librarian Staffing Changes _____	16
Other Positions Involved in Staffing Decisions _____	17
Decision-Making Factors _____	17
Types of Factors _____	18
Advantages, Disadvantages & Tradeoffs _____	20
Interviewee’s Interactions with Librarians _____	21

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

Theme Development	21
Thematic Analysis of Interviews	22
Interviewees	22
Geography	22
Position Type	24
Student Enrollment	25
Locale	26
Per Pupil Expenditures	27
Eligibility for Free/Reduced-Price Meals (Poverty)	28
Race & Ethnicity	29
Instruction Topics	30
Co-occurrence of Instructional Topics	31
Instructors of Library / Information Resources Topics	32
Instructional Topic & Instructor	33
Other Decision-Makers	35
Decision Results	36
Decision Factors by Type	37
Factors by Type & Decision Results	38
Co-occurrence of Decision Factors	40
Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore School Librarians	40
Factors in Decisions to Reduce, Eliminate, Combine or Reclassify School Librarians	44
What Decision-Makers Said	47
Interviewees Who Added or Restored Librarians	47
Interviewees Who Reduced Librarians	49
Interviewees Who Eliminated Librarians	51
Interviewees Who Combined or Reclassified Librarians	53
Tradeoffs / Advantages & Disadvantages of Decisions	56
Win-Lose Tradeoffs	56
Win-Win Advantages	57
Lose-Win Trade-Offs	58
Lose-Lose Disadvantages	58

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

Interactions of Interviewees with Librarians _____	60
Positive Interactions as Administrators with Librarians _____	61
Positive Interactions as Teachers with Librarians _____	63
Negative Interactions as Administrators with Librarians _____	63
Summary of Findings & Conclusion _____	66
Research Questions & Evolutionary Organization Theory _____	66
Interviewees _____	66
Instructional Topics & Instructors _____	66
Other Decision-Makers _____	67
Decision Results _____	67
Decision Factors by Type _____	67
Decision-Making Themes for Positive Staffing Decisions _____	68
Decision-Making Themes for Negative Staffing Decisions _____	71
What Decision-Makers Said _____	73
Advantages, Disadvantages & Tradeoffs _____	73
Positive & Negative Interactions with Librarians _____	74
Volatility of Librarian Staffing _____	74
School Librarian Employment by District _____	74
School Librarian Employment in FTEs _____	75
Impact on Students of School Librarian Employment _____	75
Recommendations _____	77
Equity and Accountability _____	77
Standards, Mandates, and Expectations _____	78
Funding and Choices _____	78
Recruitment and Certification _____	79
Curriculum and Instruction _____	80
School Librarians _____	81
Future Data Collection & Reporting _____	81
Future Research _____	82

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

References _____	83
Appendices _____	88
Appendix A. Voices of Decision-Makers Author Roles _____	89
Appendix B. SLIDE Project Interview Recruitment Form _____	90
Appendix C. SLIDE Interviewer’s Report Form _____	92
Appendix D. Contexts of School Librarian Employment _____	101
Appendix E. Perspectives on School Librarian Employment in the United States, 2009-10 to 2018-19 _____	103
Appendix F. The COVID-19 Pandemic & Inequities in Access to School Librarians: A SLIDE Special Report __	104
Appendix G. The School Librarian Equity Gap: Inequities Associated with Race and Ethnicity Compounded by Poverty, Locale, and Enrollment _____	105

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

List of Tables

	Page
Table 1. Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore Librarians by Type in Rank Order _____	19
Table 2. Factors in Decisions to Reduce, Eliminate, Combine or Reclassify Librarians by Type in Rank Order ____	20
Table 3. Number of Interviewees by State _____	23
Table 4. Distribution of Interview Districts and All Other Districts by Student Enrollment, 2021-22 _____	25
Table 5. Distribution of Interview Districts and All Other Districts by Locale _____	26
Table 6. Distribution of Interview Districts and All Other Districts by Per Pupil Expenditures, 2019-20 _____	27
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 _____	28
Table 8. Distribution of Interview Districts and All Other Districts on Majority Race (white vs. non-white), 2021-22 _____	29
Table 9. Distribution of Interview Districts and All Other Districts on Majority Ethnicity (Hispanic vs. non-Hispanic), 2021-22 _____	29
Table 10. Co-occurrence of Instructional Topics Taught Reported by Interviewees Who Added or Restored School Librarians _____	31
Table 11. Co-occurrence of Instructional Topics Taught Reported by Interviewees Who Reduced, Eliminated, Combined or Reclassified School Librarians _____	31
Table 12. Instructional Topic by Instructor Reported by Interviewees Who Added or Restored School Librarians ____	34
Table 13. Instructional Topic by Instructor Reported by Interviewees Who Reduced, Eliminated, Combined or Reclassified School Librarians _____	34
Table 14. Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore Librarians by Decision Type in Rank Order _____	37
Table 15. Factors in Decisions to Reduce, Eliminate, Combine or Reclassify Librarians by Type in Rank Order ____	38
Table 16. Co-occurrence of Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore Librarians _____	42
Table 17. Co-occurrence of Factors in Decisions to Reduce, Eliminate, Combine or Reclassify Librarians _____	45
Table 18. Structural Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore Librarians _____	48
Table 19. Pragmatic Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore Librarians _____	48
Table 20. Strategic Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore Librarians _____	49
Table 21. Structural Factors in Decisions to Reduce Librarians _____	50
Table 22. Pragmatic Factors in Decisions to Reduce Librarians _____	50
Table 23. Strategic Factors in Decisions to Reduce Librarians _____	51
Table 24. Structural Factors in Decisions to Eliminate Librarians _____	52
Table 25. Pragmatic Factors in Decisions to Eliminate Librarians _____	52
Table 26. Strategic Factors in Decisions to Eliminate Librarians _____	53
Table 27. Structural Factors in Decisions to Combine or Reclassify Librarians _____	54

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

Table 28. Pragmatic Factors in Decisions to Combine or Reclassify Librarians _____	54
Table 29. Strategic Factors in Decisions to Combine or Reclassify Librarians _____	55
Table 30. Win-Lose Tradeoffs of Adding or Restoring Librarians _____	56
Table 31. Win-Win Advantages of Adding or Restoring Librarians _____	57
Table 32. Lose-Win Tradeoffs of Reducing, Eliminating, Combining or Reclassifying Librarians _____	58
Table 33. Lose-Lose Disadvantages of Eliminating, Reducing, Combining or Reclassifying Librarians _____	59
Table 34. Positive Interactions of Interviewees as Administrators with Librarians _____	62
Table 35. Positive Interactions of Interviewees as Teachers with Librarians _____	63
Table 36. Negative Interactions of Interviewees as Administrators with Librarians _____	64
Table 37. Negative Interactions of Interviewees as Teachers with Librarians _____	65
Table 38. Librarians for Equity of Access _____	68
Table 39. More Teaching by Librarians _____	70
Table 40. New Leadership, New Priorities _____	70
Table 41. Opportunity to Meet Mandate _____	71
Table 42. New Priorities, More Specialists & Teachers _____	72
Table 43. New Leadership, New Priorities _____	73
Table 44. Can't Find a Librarian _____	73
Table 45. Local Districts Making Changes in Employment of School Librarians, 2020-21 to 2021-22 _____	75
Table 46. Changes in School Librarian Full-Time Equivalent Made by Local School Districts, 2020/21 – 2021/22	75
Table 47. Students Impacted by Changes in School Librarian Employment by School Districts, 2020-21 to 2021-22 _____	76

List of Charts

	Page
Chart 1. Interviewees by Position Type _____	24
Chart 2. Topics Taught by Library/Information Resources Staff Reported by Interviewees _____	30
Chart 3. Instructor of Library/Information Resources Topics Reported by Interviewees _____	32
Chart 4. Other Decision-Makers About Library/Information Resources Staff Reported by Interviewees _____	35
Chart 5. Interviewees by Number & Type of Decision Results _____	36
Chart 6. Factors in Decisions to Add or Restore Librarians by Factor Type _____	39
Chart 7. Factors in Decisions to Reduce, Eliminate, Combine or Reclassify Librarians by Factor Type _____	39
Chart 8. Positive Interactions with School Librarians Reported by Interviewees by Decision Results _____	60