



## Voices of Decision-Makers about School Librarian Employment Findings from the SLIDE IMLS Grant Project

AASL Conference, October 21, 2023

Debra E. Kachel, Project Director

Christie Kaaland, Advisory Council Member & Interviewer



[libslide.org](http://libslide.org) - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

# SLIDE: The School Librarian Investigation-Decline or Evolution?

---

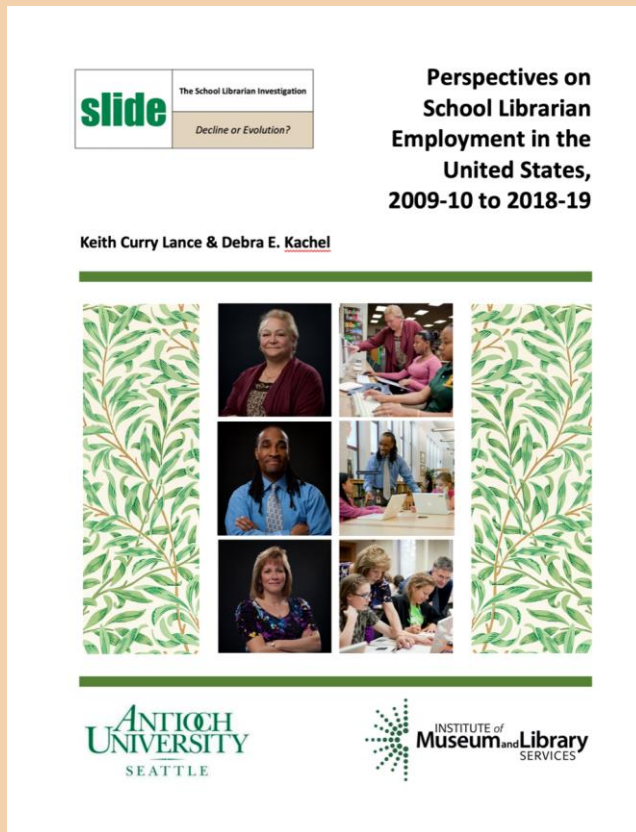


- Principal investigator: Keith Curry Lance
- Three-year grant project, 2020-2023
- Awarded to Antioch University Seattle
- Funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services, Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian grant

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

# Year 1 Report: Study of School Librarian NCES Data

slide



- Major report: [\*Perspectives on School Librarian Employment in the United States, 2009-10 to 2018-19\*](#)
- Examined [National Center for Education Statistics](#) (annually self reported from every school district)
- Public school district data only, no school level
- Approx. 13,000 districts
- Also conducted a survey state supports and requirements [\*Contexts of School Librarian Employment\*](#)

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

# Year 1 Report: Study of School Librarian NCES Data

slide

slide

The School Librarian Investigation  
Decline or Evolution?

Perspectives on  
School Librarian  
Employment in the  
United States,  
2009-10 to 2018-19

Keith Curry Lance & Debra E. Kachel

ANTIOCH  
UNIVERSITY  
SEATTLE

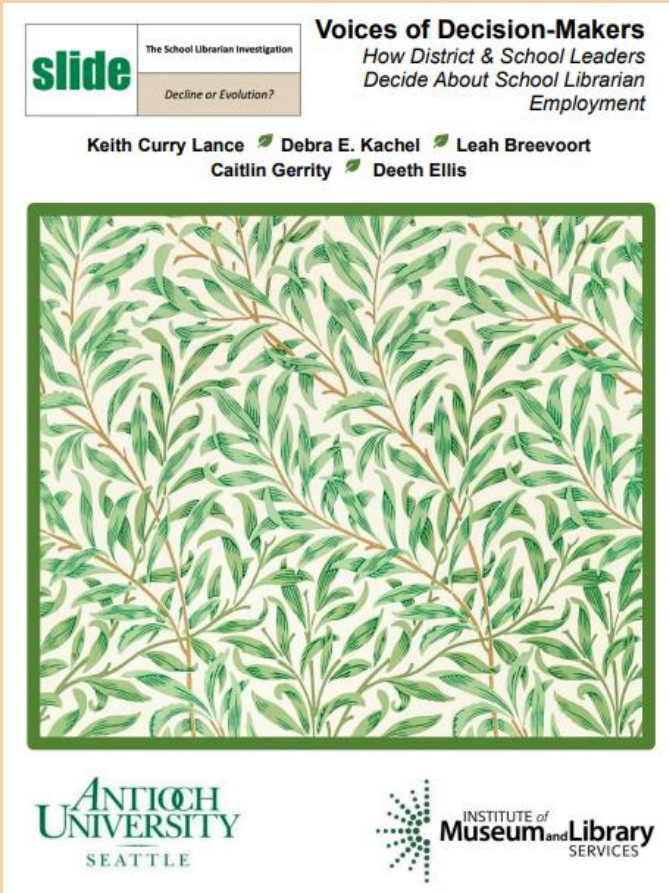
INSTITUTE of  
Museum and Library  
SERVICES

- Purpose: show inequities, provide actual data national, state and district levels
- District characteristics
  - Enrollment, Locale, Per pupil expenditures
- Student demographics
  - Race, Ethnicity, Poverty (Free & Reduced Lunch Program)
- Compared librarians to employment patterns of other educators
- Created interactive data tools for public use

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

# Year 2 Report: Interviews of Decision Makers

slide



The cover of the report features the 'slide' logo in the top left corner. The title 'Voices of Decision-Makers' is prominently displayed, followed by the subtitle 'How District & School Leaders Decide About School Librarian Employment'. Below the title, the names of the authors are listed: Keith Curry Lance, Debra E. Kachel, Leah Breevoort, Caitlin Gerrity, and Deeth Ellis. The central image is a dense, repeating pattern of green leaves and brown stems. At the bottom, the logos for Antioch University Seattle and the Institute of Museum and Library Services are visible.

slide  
The School Librarian Investigation  
Decline or Evolution?

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

Keith Curry Lance Debra E. Kachel Leah Breevoort  
Caitlin Gerrity Deeth Ellis

ANTIOCH  
UNIVERSITY  
SEATTLE

INSTITUTE of  
Museum and Library  
SERVICES

- Major report: [\*Voices of Decision-Makers: How District & School Leaders Decide about School Librarian Employment\*](#)
- 49 school leaders from 29 states and D.C.
- Superintendents, assistant superintendents, or district-level administrators
- Confidential and individual via Zoom

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE



# Phase 2 Report: Interviews of Decision Makers



**slide** The School Librarian Investigation  
Decline or Evolution?

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

Keith Curry Lance Debra E. Kachel Leah Breevoort  
Caitlin Gerrity Deeth Ellis

A decorative illustration of a dense green leafy branch, possibly a laurel wreath, filling a square frame.

**ANTIOCH UNIVERSITY**  
SEATTLE

INSTITUTE of  
**Museum and Library**  
SERVICES

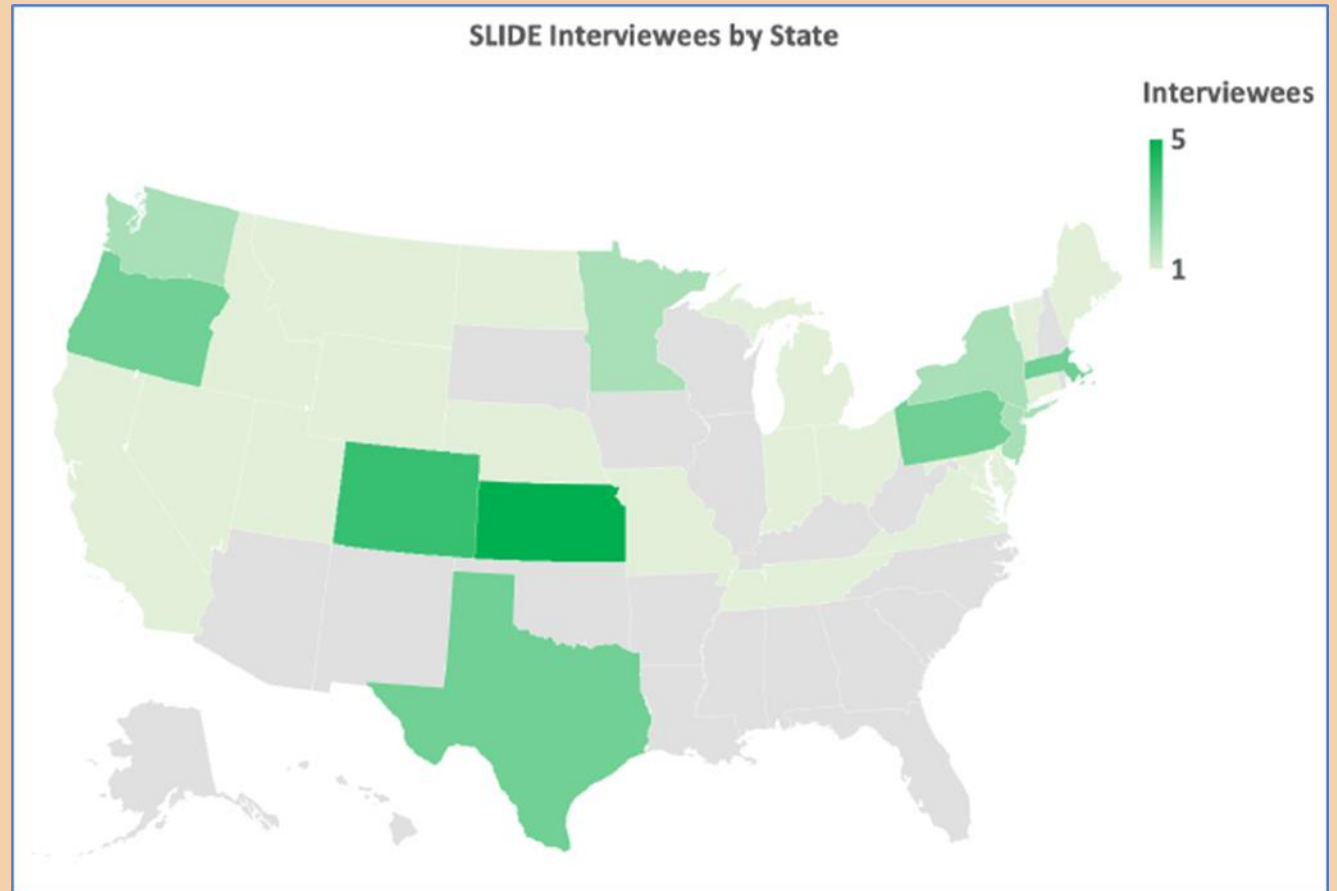
- Purpose: learn priorities and choices in staffing school libraries
- In 3 sets of districts
  1. GAINED librarians
  2. LOST SOME librarians
  3. LOST ALL librarians
- Where changes occurred since 2015-16

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

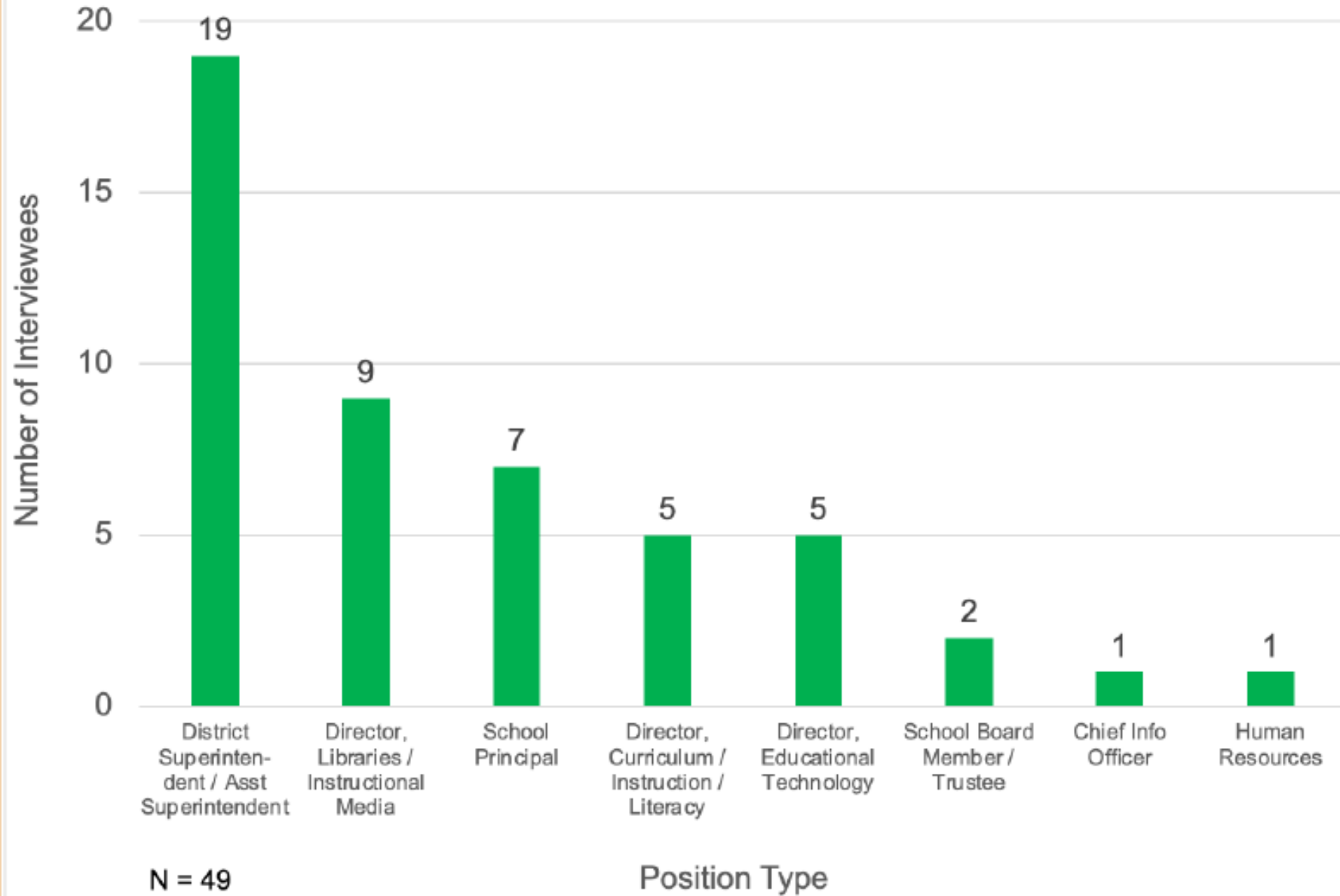
# States Represented by Interviewees



| 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            |



### Interviewees by Position Type





# Districts Represented Among Interviewees



Districts were over-represented in:

- Larger student enrollment
- Urban areas
- Lower poverty levels

But highly representative in terms of race and ethnicity



[libslide.org](http://libslide.org) - [@lib\\_SLIDE](https://twitter.com/lib_SLIDE) - [#lib\\_SLIDE](https://twitter.com/lib_SLIDE)

# Three Types of Decisions



## 1. Structural factors

- Felt they had little or no control over the decision
- Included hiring staff to address state mandates, opening/closing of buildings, and “pipeline” issues

## 2. Pragmatic factors

- Practical, logistical problems
- Included coverage for teacher planning, librarian reassigned as classroom teacher due to shortages

## 3. Strategic factors

- Discretionary, to meet school goals
- Included to improve student performance or improve equity of access to librarians
- Impacted both adding or cutting a librarian

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

# Decision Factors Cited by Interviewees



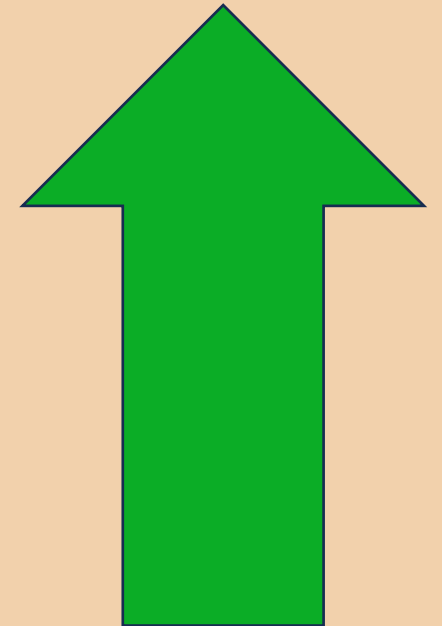
| Decision Factors | From Administrators who Added Librarians | From Administrators who Reduced or Eliminated All Librarians |
|------------------|--|--|
| Strategic        | 61                                       | 31   |
| Structural       | 21                                       | 29   |
| Pragmatic        | 7  | 11   |

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

# Most Cited Reasons for Adding Librarians

slide

- 13 - Change in priorities** (strategic)
- 11 - More instruction by librarians** (strategic)
- 10 - Equity of student access to librarians** (strategic)
- 9 - Change in administration** (strategic)
- 8 - New funding** (structural)



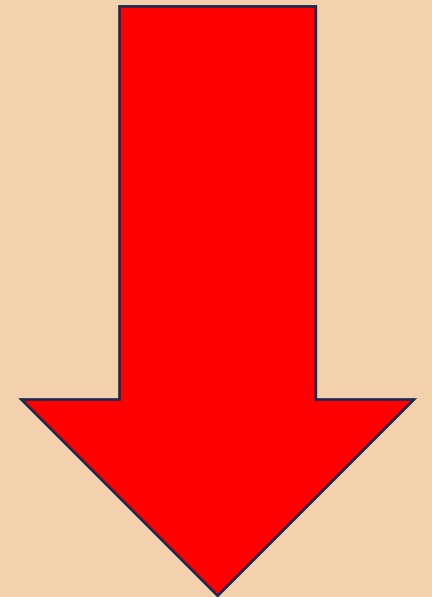
Note: The 28 interviewees cited multiple reasons.

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

# Most Cited Reasons for Cutting Librarians

---

- 17 - Budget constraints** (structural)
- 12 - Change in priorities** (strategic)
- 7 - Hired other specialists/Coaches** (strategic)
- 6 - Needed Librarian in Another Position** (pragmatic)
- 6 - Closed School/Enrollment Decreases** (structural)
- 6 - Librarian Deemed Obsolete** (strategic)



Note: The 26 interviewees cited multiple reasons.

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

# Prevailing Theme Among All Interviewees



## Changes in administration and/or changes in priorities

- Whether librarian positions were increased or decreased
- Suggests that support for school librarians is sometimes based on **preconceived beliefs** of new/incoming leaders about the value of school libraries and librarians.
- School decision makers want to see value, outcomes, and results from library programs.
- Both groups influenced by previous experiences working with or supervising school librarians, whether positive or negative

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE



# Themes – Where Librarian Positions Increased

slide



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

1. Equity of Access to Librarians
2. New Leadership, New Priorities
3. More Teaching by Librarians
4. Opportunity to Meet Mandates

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

# Themes – Where Librarian Positions Decreased

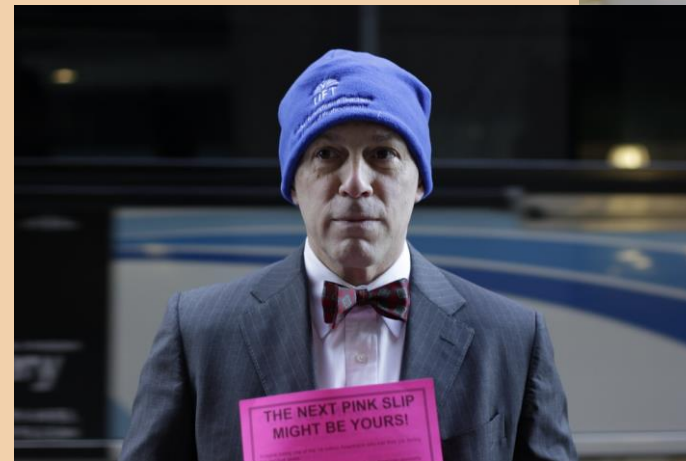


Included decisions that **reduced, eliminated, combined, or reclassified school librarian positions**

1. New Priorities, More Specialists & Teachers
2. Can't Find a Librarian
3. New Leadership, New Priorities



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

# Not All About Budget, It's About Choices

slide



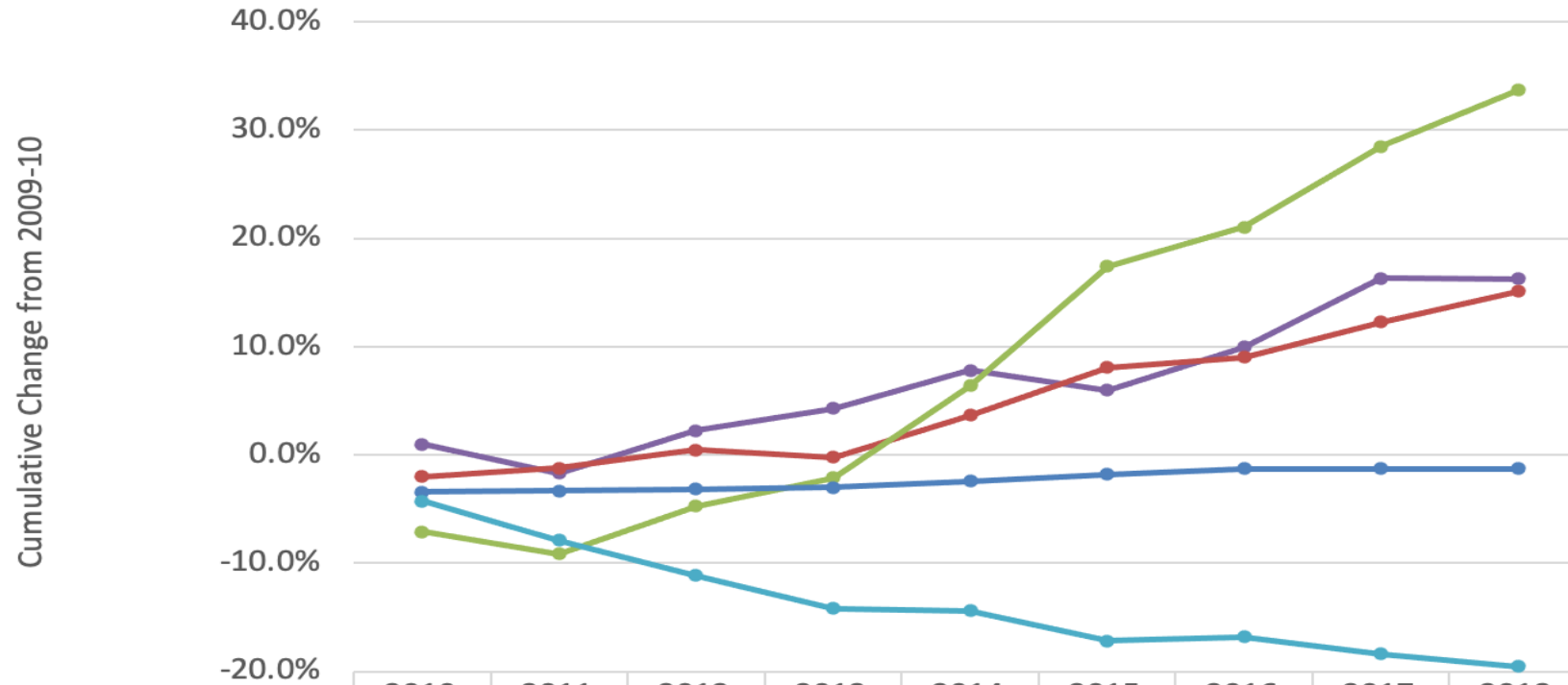
[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)

Evidence from the *Perspectives* Report negates that librarian cuts are solely about school budgets

1. Instructional coordinators and administrators increased while librarian decreased.
2. On average, districts that spent the least per student (<\$10,000) had better librarian staffing than those spending between \$15,000 and \$10,000 per student.

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

### Change Since 2009-10 in Selected Educator Positions in Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), United States, 2010-11 to 2018-19



|                            | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 |
|----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| District Administrators    | 1.0%    | -1.7%   | 2.3%    | 4.3%    | 7.8%    | 6.0%    | 10.0%   | 16.3%   | 16.3%   |
| School Administrators      | -2.0%   | -1.2%   | 0.5%    | -0.2%   | 3.7%    | 8.0%    | 9.0%    | 12.3%   | 15.1%   |
| Instructional Coordinators | -7.1%   | -9.1%   | -4.7%   | -2.1%   | 6.4%    | 17.4%   | 21.0%   | 28.5%   | 33.7%   |
| Teachers                   | -3.4%   | -3.3%   | -3.1%   | -3.0%   | -2.4%   | -1.8%   | -1.3%   | -1.2%   | -1.2%   |
| School Librarians          | -4.3%   | -7.9%   | -11.2%  | -14.2%  | -14.4%  | -17.2%  | -16.8%  | -18.4%  | -19.5%  |

Instructional coordinator FTEs have increased by almost 34%.

Librarian FTEs have decreased by 20%.

# Impact of COVID – Volatile Staffing Patterns



---

From 2020-21 to 2021-22

- **15.4%** (1,833) of school districts added librarians
- 37% (4,405) of school districts retained librarians
- **15.9%** (1,888) of school districts reduced or eliminated all librarians

## **BOTTOM LINE**

**31.8% (3,793) school districts had no librarians either year**

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

# Impact of COVID – Volatile Staffing Patterns



Based on 2021-2022 NCES data:

- **35% of all school districts had NO librarians - 7.1 millions students.**
- Of those districts with no librarians, 57 percent were majority-minority districts.
- In short, **access to school librarians continues to be a major source of educational inequity.**

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE



## Custom Search

Select and examine—by district or state—specific NCES data concerning employment of school librarians and others as well as district characteristics and student demographics.

NOTE: The data for 2015-16 to 2018-19 were corrected where possible for completeness and accuracy, relying chiefly on state data sources. (See [Appendix A: Data Quality](#) for details.) Data from 2019-20 forward have not been subjected to this review and revision. If your state's data appears less than complete and accurate, please refer to your state department of education's data office that submits data to NCES's Common Core of Data (CCD) project. Ultimately, state departments of education and school districts are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of their data.

## District Comparison

Examine library staffing data for a selected district compared with peer districts.

## District Profile

Generate a ready-to-use profile for your district and similar districts that can be shared with decision-makers and others. Available in both HTML and PDF formats.

## State Profile

Examine library staffing data for a single state over time and compare those trends to those for other educator positions.

## State Survey

View data collected during a Fall 2020 survey of all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The survey gathered state-specific information to provide context to the findings of the SLIDE study's other analyses.

# SLIDE Interactive Data Tools



Making NCES data more searchable and usable at national, state and district levels.

<https://libslide.org/data-tools/>

@lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

**SCHOOL LIBRARY  
DISTRICT PROFILE**  
PHILADELPHIA CITY SD, PA



**AT A GLANCE**  
**2021-22 SCHOOL DISTRICT STATISTICS**

- 218 Schools
- 118,053 Students
- 1 Librarians in Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)
- 0.00 Librarian FTE Per School
- 118,053 Students Per Librarian FTE
- 7,969 Teachers FTE Per Librarian FTE

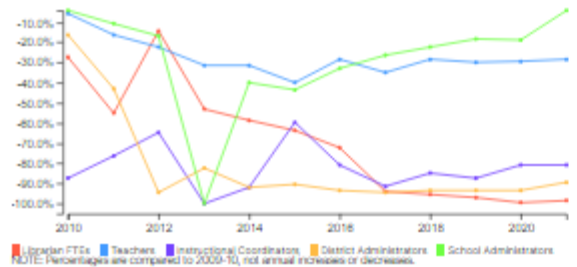
National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data accessed from <https://libslide.org/data-tools/>

**SCHOOL LIBRARIAN FTES, 2017-18 TO 2021-22**  
**PHILADELPHIA CITY SD, PA**



NOTE: Percentages are compared to 2009-10, not annual increases or decreases.

**EMPLOYMENT TRENDS BY EDUCATOR TYPE, PERCENT CHANGE FROM 2017-18 PHILADELPHIA CITY SD, PA**



Today, the role of school librarian includes teaching students media literacy, internet safety, and digital citizenship, assisting teachers in designing and delivering lessons and selecting resources and integrating technology into the curriculum, in addition to managing collections and encouraging reading.

How school librarian losses are impacting those students who likely need their services the most should be of major concern to education policy makers.

The School Librarian Investigation—Decline or Evolution?  
Kachel & Lance, 2022

**SCHOOL LIBRARY IMPACT RESEARCH**

Multiple studies have found that test scores tend to be higher in schools where librarians spend more time:

- Instructing students, both with classroom teachers and independently;
- Planning collaboratively with classroom teachers;
- Providing professional development to teachers;
- Meeting regularly with the principal;
- Serving on key school leadership committees;
- Facilitating the use of technology by students and teachers;
- Providing technology support to teachers, and
- Providing reading incentive programs.

Several library impact studies suggest test scores tend to be higher where administrators, teachers, and librarians themselves think of the school librarian as a school leader; as a teacher, co-teacher, and in-service professional development provider; as a curriculum designer, instructional resources manager, and reading motivator; and as a technology teacher, troubleshooter, and source of instructional support. (Lance & Kachel, 2018)

**SLIDE REPORTS, WEBSITE & DATA TOOLS**

K.C. Lance, D.E. Kachel, L. Breevoort, C. Gerrity, & D. Ellis. (2023, August). Voices of decision-makers: how district & school leaders decide about school librarian employment. SLIDE: The School Librarian Investigation—Decline or Evolution? <https://libslide.org/publications/voices>

K.C. Lance & D.E. Kachel (August 2022). The COVID-19 Pandemic & Inequities in Access to School Librarians: A SLIDE Special Report. <https://libslide.org/pubs/Pre-Post-COVID-Analysis-Special-Report.pdf>.

K.C. Lance & D.E. Kachel (July 2021). Perspectives on School Librarian Employment in the United States, 2009-10 to 2018-19. <https://libslide.org/publications/perspectives/>.

K.C. Lance & D.E. Kachel (March 2018). Why school librarians matter: what years of research tell us. Phi Delta Kappan. <https://kappanonline.org/lance-kachel-school-librarians-matter-years-research/>.

The School Librarian Investigation—Decline or Evolution? (SLIDE) website. <https://libslide.org>.

Data Tools: <https://libslide.org/data-tools/>.

SLIDE is a 2020-23 project of Antioch University Seattle and was funded by a Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian grant from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services.

**Example of a District Profile**

- District statistics
- Trend line chart of librarian FTEs and other educators
- School Library Impact Research
- SLIDE links

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>slide</b> | <b>The School Librarian Investigation:</b> |
|              | <i>Decline or Evolution?</i>               |

# Voices Authors



---

**Keith Curry Lance, Principal Investigator, Consultant, RSL Research Group**

**Debra E. Kachel, Project Director, Affiliate Faculty, Antioch University Seattle**

**Leah Breevort, Consultant, RSL Research Group**

**Caitlin Gerrity, Associate Professor & School Library Endorsement Program Director  
Southern Utah University**

**Deeth Ellis, Doctoral Student, Library & Information Science, Simmons University  
Head Librarian, Boston Latin School**

**libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE**

# Voices Interviewers & Coders



---

## **Interviewers and Coding:**

Susan D. Ballard - retired (Director, Library, Media & Technology Services & Past-President, AASL)

Deborah D. Levitov, Ph.D. - retired (School Library Monthly & Teacher Librarian)

Rebecca Morris, Ph.D. - University of Pittsburgh

Mark Ray - Future Ready Librarians

**Interviewer:** Christie Kaaland, Ed.D. – Antioch University Seattle

**Coding:** Caitlin Gerrity - Southern Utah University, Deb Kachel & Keith Curry Lance

**Video:** Leah Breevoort

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

# Special Thanks to SLIDE Advisory Council



- Josh Engel, EdSurge
- April Grace, Ed.D., Shawnee Public Schools, Oklahoma
- Christie Kaaland, Ed.D., Antioch University Seattle
- Kathy Lester, East Middle School, Plymouth, Michigan (AASL President, 2022-23)
- Judi Moreillon, Ph.D., Literacies & Libraries Consultant
- Renee Ousley-Swank, California Department of Education
- Mark Ray, Future Ready Librarians
- Joyce Kasman Valenza, Ph.D., Rutgers University

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE

# SLIDE: The School Librarian Investigation—Evolution or Decline?

---

slide

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Grant [Project RE-246368-OLS-20](#).

Its views, findings, conclusions & recommendations do not necessarily represent those of IMLS.





# For More Information



- <https://www.libSLIDE.org>
  - Publications: major reports, articles, infographics
  - Presentations: ALA, AASL & other conferences
  - Interactive Data Tools (get tables, charts & maps of data you select)
- Contact project leaders
  - Project director: Debra E. Kachel, Affiliate Faculty, Antioch U Seattle, [dkachel@antioch.edu](mailto:dkachel@antioch.edu)
  - Principal investigator: Keith Curry Lance, RSL Research Group, [keithlance@comcast.net](mailto:keithlance@comcast.net)

libslide.org - @lib\_SLIDE - #lib\_SLIDE