

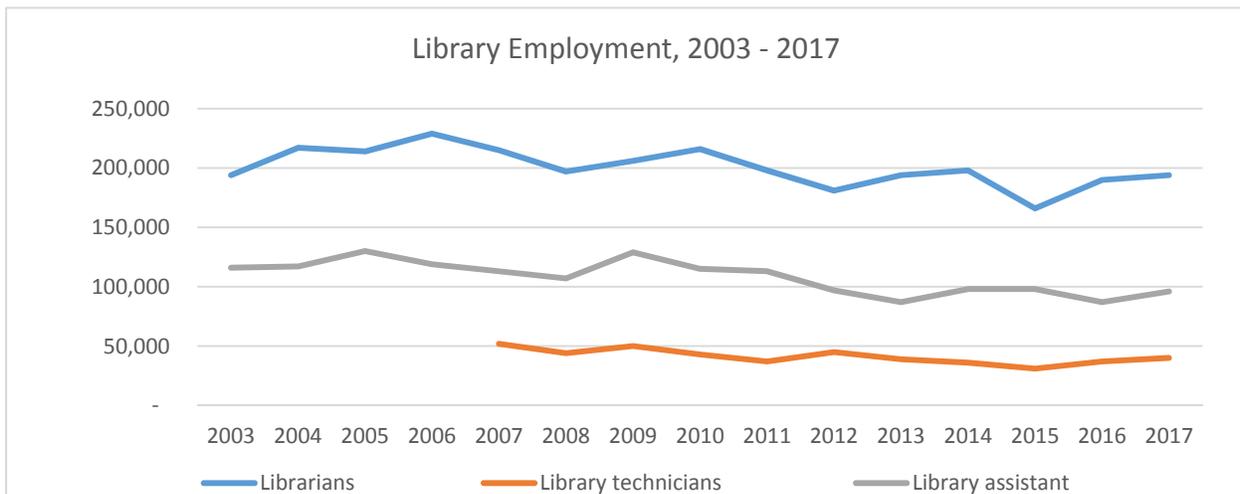
LIBRARY WORKERS: FACTS & FIGURES

Libraries and library staff provide essential services for schools, universities, and communities. Americans use libraries for free, reliable, and organized access to books, the Internet, and other sources of information and entertainment; assistance finding work; research and reference assistance; and programs for children, immigrants, and other groups with specific needs, just to name a few.

This fact sheet explores: library staff in the workforce, diversity within the professions, education attainment of library workers, the role of women in the professions, issues of pay and pay equity, and the union difference for library staff.

An Overview of Library Professionals and Libraries

- In 2017, there were 194,000 librarians, 40,000 library technicians, and 96,000 library assistants employed.¹ Generally, a “librarian” is a person who holds at least a master’s degree in library science or meets state teaching license standards for being a school librarian.² “Library technicians” assist librarians in the acquisition, preparation, and organization of materials “and assist users in locating the appropriate resources.”³ “Library assistants” are similar to library technicians, but may have fewer responsibilities.
- From 2007 through 2017, cumulative employment among librarians, library technicians, and library assistants declined from 380,000 to 330,000.
- The mean annual earnings of librarians in 2017 were \$60,760.⁴
- The mean hourly wage of library technicians was \$17.07 in 2017.⁵



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, BLS, Current Population Survey, Household Data Annual Averages, Table 11, 2003 – 2017.

- Library assistants earned a mean hourly wage of \$13.54 in 2017.⁶
- In 2013, public libraries circulated 2.37 billion materials and offered 4.3 million programs, attended by 97 million members of the public. Children’s programs accounted for 59 percent of all programs offered.⁷ In a 2016 Pew Research survey, 77 percent of Americans aged 16 and older believed libraries provided necessary resources. Among young people (aged 16 to 29), 84 percent believed libraries provided them with necessary resources.⁸
- Public libraries provided access to 281,000 computers with internet access in 2013. Library patrons used these computers over 334 million times during that year.⁹ In 2012, 62 percent of libraries reported that they provided the only free public internet access in their community.¹⁰

Employment of Library Professionals

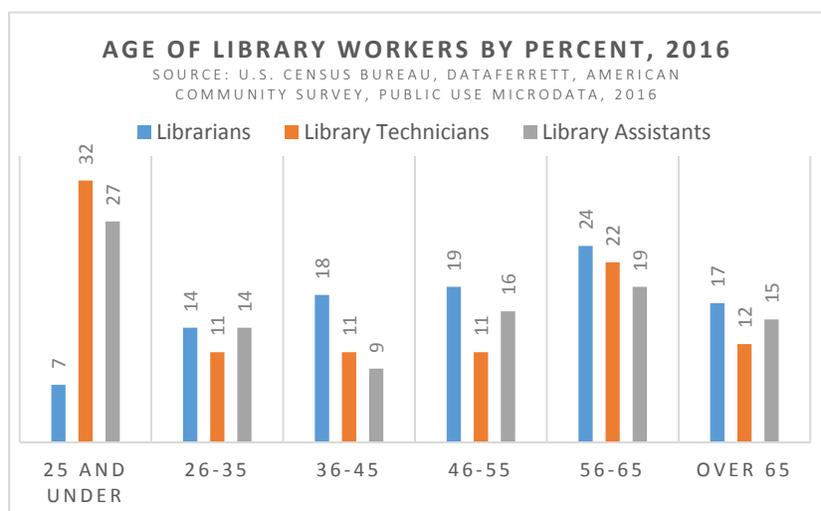
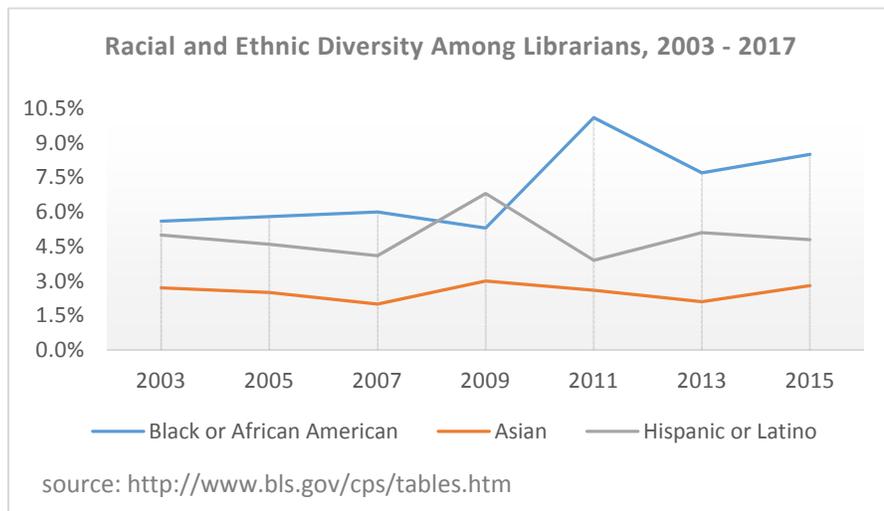
- Most librarians, 60 percent, worked in school and academic libraries in 2017. Just over 32 percent of librarians worked in public libraries. The remainder worked in special libraries, including businesses, law firms, nonprofits, and scientific organizations.¹¹
- In 2017, 27 percent of librarians worked part-time.¹² Public and college librarians often work weekends and evenings, as well as some holidays.¹³ School librarians usually have the same workday and vacation schedules as classroom teachers.¹⁴ Special librarians usually work normal business hours, but in fast-paced industries such as advertising or legal services, often work longer hours when needed.¹⁵
- More than half of all library technicians and 62 percent library assistants were employed by local governments; many other library technicians and assistants work in school libraries.¹⁶ Among library technicians, 61 percent worked part-time and 51 percent of library assistants worked part-time in 2017.¹⁷
- Employment of elementary and secondary school librarians and library workers declined 32 percent between 2007 and 2017. In 2017, elementary and secondary schools employed just over 45,000 librarians (full and part time). This was down from just over 63,000 employed in 2007.¹⁸ Employment of library technicians and library assistants declined 37 percent from 2007 to 2017.¹⁹

Diversity among Library Workers

The librarian profession suffers from a persistent lag of racial and ethnic diversity that shows few signs of abating.

- Over 86 percent of librarians were White, non-Hispanic in 2017. Library technicians and assistants had greater diversity. Among library assistants in 2017, just over 80 percent were White, non-Hispanic.²⁰

- In 2017, just 6.4 percent of librarians were Black or African American, 10.4 percent were Hispanic or Latino, and 5.2 percent were Asian.²¹
- Among all workers in education, training, and library occupations, Black and African American professionals made up 10 percent of the workforce, while Hispanic and Asian professionals represented 10 percent and 4.7 percent of the education workforce, respectively.²²
- In 2016, 41 percent of librarians, 33 percent of library technicians, and 33 percent of library assistants were over the age of 55.²³



Education Attainment

Many library workers, including lower paid library technicians and library assistants have high education attainment. In 2016, seven percent of library technicians reported having earned an associate’s degree; 20 percent had a bachelor’s degree; and 10 percent had a master’s degree or higher. Among library assistants in 2016, nine percent reported having earned an associate’s degree; 30 percent had earned a bachelor’s degree; and nine percent had earned a master’s degree or higher.²⁴

Among librarians in 2016, 56 percent had earned at least a master’s degree and 24 percent reported their highest degree completed was a bachelor’s degree.²⁵

Women and Library Work

- In 2017, women accounted for 79 percent of all librarians, which was above the average of 73 percent for women employed in all education and library professions.²⁶ Women have traditionally made up a majority of the library profession. In 1995, women were 83.9 percent of librarians; in 2003, women were 84.4 percent of librarians.²⁷
- Women represented 80 percent of graduates in Master of Library Science (MLS) programs in 2014-2015. Black women were 2.4 percent of all MLS graduates, while Hispanic and

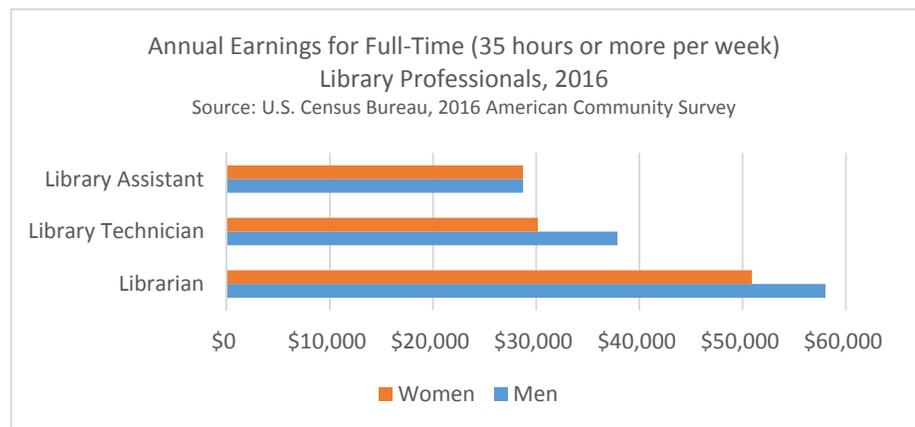
Asian/Pacific Islander women accounted for 3.5 and 1.2 percent of the 2015 class, respectively.²⁸

The Wage Gap and Library Worker Earnings

Pay inequity remains a persistent and pervasive problem in society. In 2017, median weekly earnings for women were 82 percent of men's earnings.²⁹ For most women of color, the earnings gap is even larger: African American women earned just 70 cents for every dollar earned by men in 2017.³⁰ Hispanic and Latina women earned just 64 cents for every dollar men earned.³¹ Asian women reported the highest earnings, 96 cents on the dollar compared to all men.³² However, they earned only 75 cents to the dollar reported by Asian men.³³

Despite the fact that the library profession is predominantly female, a wage gap still exists:

- In 2016, women working as full-time librarians (35 hours or more per week) reported a median annual salary of \$50,911, compared to \$58,032 for men.³⁴ A pay gap of 88 percent.



- The disparity was even more staggering among full-time library technicians where women earned \$30,156 per year, compared to men who earned \$37,870 per year (an 80 percent gap). However, the margin of error for men's salaries was high, since there were fewer men in the sample.
- Among librarians with a master's degree or higher working 35 hours a week or more, women earned 90 percent of what men earned in 2016.³⁵ Women, on average, were over two years older than their male counterparts.³⁶

The American Library Association-Allied Professional Association published the *Advocating for Better Salaries Toolkit* in April 2017. One section of the toolkit addresses how librarians can address pay equity issues in their library.³⁷

Regional Variance in Salaries

- Nationally, the mean annual earnings for librarians was \$60,760 in 2017.³⁸ Earnings varied significantly from state to state. The mean annual earnings in Washington, D.C. topped the list at \$84,090 in 2017 followed by California, Maryland, Alaska, and Virginia. The average annual mean earnings of these five states was \$74,776 in 2017. The five lowest paying states were Idaho, West Virginia, South Dakota, Oklahoma, and Mississippi where the average annual earnings among the five states was \$42,874.³⁹ These salaries were not adjusted for differences in cost of living across states.

Institutional Variance in Compensation

Library staff compensation also varied based on the type of library employer: government, postsecondary, or elementary and secondary school.

- Librarians employed by local governments earned a mean salary of \$54,560 in 2017. Elementary and secondary school librarians earned a mean salary of \$63,170 in 2017. Librarians in colleges, universities, and professional schools earned a mean average of \$66,650 in 2017.⁴⁰
- Among library technicians in 2017, those employed by local governments earned a mean hourly wage of \$16.16, those employed in elementary and secondary schools earned \$17.16 per hour, and colleges and universities paid an average of \$19.67 per hour.⁴¹
- Library assistants were the lowest paid library workers in 2017. Local governments paid an hourly mean wage of \$13.28, elementary and secondary schools paid \$13.87, and colleges and universities paid a mean hourly wage of \$15.22 to library assistants in 2017.⁴²

Health Benefits

- In 2016, 80 percent of librarians had health insurance through a current or former employer or union. Librarians employed by the government had the highest rate of employer or union health insurance coverage, 80 percent. Librarians employed by private-for-profit companies had the lowest rate of coverage, 78 percent. Three percent of librarians were uninsured in 2016.⁴³
- Among library technicians in 2016, just 68 percent received health insurance through a current or former employer or union. Among library technicians employed in the public sector, 70 percent received health insurance through their employer or union. In the private sector, 65 percent received health insurance from their employer or union. Five percent were uninsured in 2016 and the remainder received insurance through Medicare, Medicaid, or from some other source.⁴⁴
- Library assistants had coverage similar to that of library technicians. Just 66 percent had employer-provided health insurance in 2016. Private for-profit employers only provided health insurance to 63 percent of employees and 68 percent of those employed in the public sector received health insurance through their employer. Five percent were uninsured and the remainder received Medicare, Medicaid, or had some other source of health insurance.⁴⁵

The Union Difference

Unions are an important way for library professionals to negotiate collectively for better pay, benefits, and working conditions. Unions work to elevate library professions and secure working conditions that make it possible to provide professional service.

- In 2017, workers in education, training, and library occupations had the highest unionization rate for any professional occupation group, 33.5 percent.⁴⁶
- In 2017, 26.2 percent of librarians were union members.⁴⁷
- In 2017, among library technicians, 19.3 percent were union members.⁴⁸
- Among library assistants, 22.7 percent were union members in 2017.⁴⁹

- Just over 14 percent of other education, training, and library workers were union members in 2017.⁵⁰

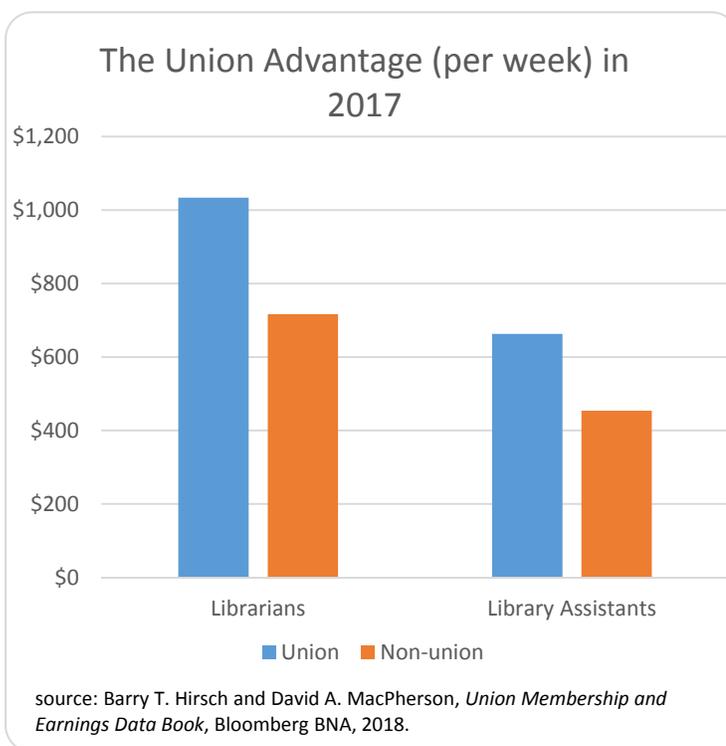
Wages and Benefits

Librarians and library worker union members have leveraged their collective voices to earn fair wages and stronger benefits. Wages and benefits earned by union librarians and library workers are more commensurate with the skilled and professional nature of library work.

In 2017, librarians who were union members earned 31 percent (\$317) more per week than their non-union counterparts.⁵¹

While there has been a lot of volatility in wages reported by librarians, likely due to economic factors that affect library funding, it has paid to be a union librarian.

- In 2017, union library assistants earned 31 percent more than their non-union counterparts.⁵²
- Union salary data was not available for library technicians in 2015. In 2009, the last year comparative data was available, union library technicians earned 49 percent more than their non-union counterparts.⁵³
- Union workers are more likely than their non-union counterparts to be covered by a retirement plan, health insurance, and paid sick leave. In 2017, 94 percent of union members in the civilian workforce had access to a retirement plan, compared with only 66 percent of non-union workers. Similarly, 94 percent of union members had access to employer provided health insurance, compared to 67 percent of non-union workers in 2017. In 2017, 87 percent of union members in the civilian workforce had access to paid sick leave compared to 69 percent of non-union workers.⁵⁴



Union Success Stories

Librarians represented by the American Federation of Teachers in the University of California system negotiated fair pay increases and a dedicated professional development fund for the represented librarians. The professional development fund sets an annual minimum of nearly \$280,000 for the 345 represented librarians. The contract is effective from 2013 to 2018.⁵⁵

In 2013, the Prince George’s County, Maryland executive’s proposal to cut \$820,000 from the Prince George’s County library system turned into a \$2.5 million add back thanks to members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1994. Union members advocated for their library and their patrons at county council meetings as well as during one-on-one meetings with council members. Local 1994 members educated council members about the devastating

impact budget cuts have on libraries and communities. The budget increase was used to increase library hours on Sundays, increase staff wages, and hire new staff.⁵⁶

For more information on professional and technical workers, check the DPE website:
www.dpeaflcio.org.

The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE) comprises 24 AFL-CIO unions representing over four million people working in professional and technical occupations. DPE-affiliated unions represent: teachers, college professors, and school administrators; library workers; nurses, doctors, and other health care professionals; engineers, scientists, and IT workers; journalists and writers, broadcast technicians and communications specialists; performing and visual artists; professional athletes; professional firefighters; psychologists, social workers, and many others. DPE was chartered by the AFL-CIO in 1977 in recognition of the rapidly growing professional and technical occupations.

Source: DPE Research Department
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May 2018

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