PARTNERSHIP
The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research
Revue canadienne de la pratique et de la recherche en bibliothéconomie et sciences de l'information

vol. 17, no. 2 (2022)
Theory and Research (peer-reviewed)
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v17i2.7055

"Relationships of Care": Care and Meaning in Canadian Academic Librarian Work during COVID-19

« Les relations du care » : care et sens dans le travail des bibliothécaires universitaires canadiens pendant la COVID-19

Amy McLay Paterson
Assessment and User Experience Librarian
Thompson Rivers University Library
apaterson@tru.ca

Nicole Eva
Associate University Librarian
University of Lethbridge Library
nicole.eva@uleth.ca

Abstract / Résumé

In March and April 2021, we conducted semi-structured interviews with academic librarians from across Canada about their experiences working through COVID-19 thus far. Topics included workload, collegiality, and overall satisfaction with their working conditions during a pandemic. Themes emerged around job security, meaningful work, workload shifts, working from home, relationships with colleagues and administrators, and hopes for the future. While individual experiences varied greatly, the biggest uniting factor was the care and deliberation that characterized both our participants' framing of work that was meaningful to them as well as their ideal relationships with colleagues and administrators. This research connects to previous literature on vocational awe and emotional labour in libraries. For librarians, this study connects isolated individual situations with the overall picture of what our work looked and felt like during the COVID-19 pandemic. For library administrators, we have identified some general trends, which can provide insight in the areas of communication, flexibility, and institutional support as we work toward a post-pandemic new normal.

En mars et avril 2021, nous avons mené des entrevues semi-dirigées auprès de bibliothécaires universitaires à travers le Canada au sujet de leur expérience de travail durant la COVID-19 jusqu'à présent. Les sujets abordés comprenaient la charge de travail, la collégialité et la satisfaction générale à l'égard de leurs conditions de travail pendant la pandémie. Des thèmes ont émergé concernant la sécurité d'emploi, le sens du travail, les changements de la charge de travail, le travail à distance, les relations avec des collègues et des administrateurs, et l'espoir pour l'avenir. Quoique les expériences individuelles varient grandement, le plus grand facteur unifiant est le care et la délibération qui caractérisent à la fois l'encadrement par nos participants du travail qui a du sens pour eux ainsi que leurs relations idéales avec des collègues et des administrateurs. Cette enquête se joint à la recherche antérieure sur l'émerveillement professionnel et le travail émotionnel dans les bibliothèques. Pour les bibliothécaires, cette étude relie des situations individuelles isolées pour offrir un portrait général de ce à quoi ressemblait notre travail et de ce que nous ressentions face à celui-ci durant la pandémie de la COVID-19. Pour les administrateurs des bibliothèques, nous avons identifié quelques tendances générales qui peuvent fournir un aperçu dans les domaines de la communication, la flexibilité et le soutien institutionnel alors que nous travaillons vers une nouvelle normalité post-pandémique.

Keywords / Mots-clés

academic librarians, librarian workload, COVID-19, care in libraries, library labour, affective labour; bibliothécaires universitaires, charge de travail des bibliothécaires, COVID-19, le care en bibliothèque, le travail des bibliothèques, le travail affectif

Introduction

"I think the pandemic has really heightened for me how much of my work is embedded in things like relationships of care, and how difficult it has been to provide the same level in a virtual space." – "Jana", study participant

We undertook this research from an isolated place, in response to an urge to seek out empathy and unity with our colleagues, to walk in their shoes (or cardigans, if you prefer) and to allow others to walk in ours. Ever since our universities shut their doors in March 2020, we have questioned what it means to work in libraries as a helping profession. Boundaries between home-life and work-life—always precariously drawn at the doors of the library building—were torn down, as we found ourselves working multiple full-time jobs: at once librarians, teachers, and caregivers. Each of these jobs seemed to make constant simultaneous demands on our faculties both for labour and for care. As we wrote in our previous article on this study (McLay Paterson & Eva, 2022), we felt our jobs and our relationships with coworkers and administration changing in myriad ways, occasionally inventive and inspiring but often outside of our control. In essence, our research originated as a panacea for work-related COVID struggles; to ward off worries and feelings of loneliness and isolation, we wanted to locate our experiences within the collective narrative of our profession during this time.

In the course of our interviews with academic librarian colleagues across Canada about their work experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, the biggest uniting factor throughout the responses was the care and deliberation that characterized both our participants' discussion of work that was meaningful to them, as well as their ideal relationships with colleagues and administrators. Furthermore, there were consistent themes in how participants framed care in library work, not as self-sacrifice but as intentional choices, transparent communication, and the freedom to focus energy and resources on meaningful work rather than on traditional metrics. This article will focus on the themes surrounding librarians' focus on and framing of the role of care in their work during COVID-19; a previous article (McLay Paterson & Eva, 2022) focused on themes related to the shape of and the major changes to academic librarian work.

Literature Review

Academic Care Labour during COVID-19

The emerging literature on academic care labour during COVID-19 clusters around two major themes: first, that the additional burden of care largely fell to women (Gray, 2021; Bisaillon et al., 2021; Bessette & McGowan, 2020; Minello et al., 2020), particularly those with additional caregiving responsibilities in the home; second, individual wellness or self-care strategies cannot replace necessary structural support for this work (Ismael et al., 2021).

That women have borne the brunt of academic care labour during COVID is particularly relevant to libraries, since 72–74% of the workforce are women (American Library Association, 2012; Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2017). Gray (2021) explicitly connects her care work with her own child during COVID-19 to her role as a faculty member, stating that "care does not have to be burdensome, but it becomes so within systems that refuse to make space for it" (p. 9). Bisaillon et al. (2021) concurred that women's caretaking roles in the home routinely extend to the university and that these duties often come to displace those that are more measurable or visible. In their qualitative study of academic mothers, Minello et al. (2020) observed that the increased care burden on women during the pandemic caused anxiety for their participants who "do not accept that their productivity will be compared to that of those without caring duties" (p. 589). Hudson-Vitale and Waltz (2020) stressed the importance of caring and providing support for workers when managing during a pandemic rather than adding new obligations. Anderson and Kelliher (2020) echoed this sentiment with their contention that many women do not experience the supposed flexibility of the remote work environment due to additional care responsibilities at home.

Gaudet et al. (2021) concluded that self-care duties cannot be sufficiently attended to due to the enormity of other demands in both work and life. Ismael et al. (2021) held talking circles with a cross-section of employees at their college to discuss the implications of care labour in a post-secondary institution; their participants revealed that while the caring elements of their jobs brought much joy and meaning, it was also the source of over-work, anxiety, and burnout. Ironically, in their institution, the act of holding these circles created a network of support around caring in the institution and

helped drive policy changes. Bessette and McGowan (2020) argued that in their faculty development roles, care work is essential and needs to be explicitly incorporated into workload expectations.

Affective Librarianship

Literature on affective librarianship owes much to Hochschild's (2012/1983) work on emotional labour, which she defines as work done to "induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (p. 7). Sloniowski (2016) explores the element of affective labour inherent in library work, calling for it to be more explicitly recognized and valued, while Arellano Douglas (2020) contends that affective librarianship is purposely understudied because "librarians have sought to distance themselves from the idea that library work is care work, service work, and feminized work" (p. 54). Many other studies have reiterated that the immaterial reproductive labour that librarians engage in is routinely erased and devalued (Allison-Cassin, 2020; Nicholson, 2021; Revitt, 2020; Seale & Mirza, 2020). Despite the disproportionately low amount of space it is afforded by the literature, emotional labour nevertheless permeates the librarianship profession. Emmelhainz et al. (2017) found that the *Guidelines for behavioral performance of reference and information service providers* located the success of reference transactions almost entirely in the behaviour rather than the competence of the librarian, while Julien and Genuis (2009) focused on the emotional labour components of information literacy instruction. Numerous studies (Matteson & Miller, 2013; Rodger & Erickson, 2021; Shuler & Morgan, 2013) have shown that the emotional labour required for library work can lead to increased burnout and decreased job satisfaction. While Joe (2019) suggests using mindfulness techniques to counter some of the strain of emotional labour, she avoids any discussion of its relation to the erasure of immaterial labour.

Morale and Wellbeing

Though Kendrick (2017) noted an absence of LIS literature on morale, there have been a number of recent studies addressing the subject of morale and wellbeing of librarians. Nardine's 2019 study found liaison librarians reported high levels of burnout, partly due to high workloads. Wood et al. (2020) conducted a large-scale survey of US academic librarians in which 70% of librarians, regardless of gender or age, reported high levels of burnout. Kendrick's (2017) work on low morale and burnout experiences in academic libraries revealed that negligence is often a contributing factor, "especially with regard to poor leadership, ineffective communication, and feelings of being undervalued" (p. 30).

Burnout is a recurring topic in the discourse of the helping professions, and evidence suggests that the pandemic only fanned those flames. Salvesen and Berg (2021) surveyed New Jersey librarians about their emotional experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and uncovered a majority of respondents citing negative effects on their overall wellbeing due to both day-to-day stress and larger issues, such as lack of support from their administration. Weyant et al. (2021) reviewed 40 recent articles studying elements of librarian morale and found that low morale in libraries stems from

many different sources, including relationships with colleagues, relationships with supervisors, and external factors, such as technological or budgetary changes**.**

Martyniuk et al. (2021) discussed their experiences as new library professionals starting at new workplaces during COVID. They concluded that "cultivating a sense of belonging for new hires" (p. 7) is critical and that the remote work environment made this difficult without going above and beyond what would have previously been considered standard. Of remote work during COVID in general, Hernandez and Abigail (2020) were primarily concerned that the social isolation of remote work would ultimately be harmful to worker wellbeing, based on their review of previous studies. Todorinova (2021), on the other hand, surveyed 145 public services librarians about their experiences working remotely and uncovered intriguing possibilities for remote library work in the longer term, so long as flexibility was considered and access to the privilege of remote work could be extended further to support staff.

Library Value and Image

Librarianship is continually reckoning with the tension between acknowledging our work as labour and falling prey to the rosy mystique—Borges' Paradise as "a kind of library"—that would frame our institutions as utopian. Numerous scholars have connected libraries' irrational devotion to the neoliberal value agenda to the continued devaluation of immaterial labour (Seale & Mirza, 2020; Pagowsky, 2021; Popowich, 2019; Nicholson, 2019). This persistent failure to align practices with stated values is echoed in librarians' anxiety around image maintenance (see Hicks, 2016): for example, Santamaria's (2020) discussion of the fantastical image that libraries create for the purpose of obscuring the centrality of whiteness in library belonging. O'Neill and Kelley's (2021) study of crisis communication in academic libraries uncovered significant "hesitancy or reluctance to communicate bad news, especially for those crises that may present a more significant negative impact on a library's reputation" (p. 321). While non-librarian staff are outside the scope of our study, Glusker et al. (2022) found that intra-library communication issues may be even worse for non-librarian staff, who perceive many communications as being only directed at librarians.

Finally, Ettarh's (2018, "Introduction," para. 3) groundbreaking work on vocational awe—the ideas and values library workers hold "that result in beliefs that libraries as institutions are inherently good and sacred, and therefore beyond critique"—outlined the ways that library workers are undermined by pressures, if not demands, to sacrifice themselves to their work. One potential antidote to increasing productivity demands is the movement towards "slow librarianship" (Glassman, 2017; Farkas, 2021), which prioritizes care and thoughtfulness over innovation.

Methodology

The following description of our methodology has been taken from our previous article (McLay Paterson & Eva, 2022) with slight edits. As our goal was to explore in-depth individual experiences, we determined that semi-structured interviews would be the best method of capturing our participants' thoughts, feelings and understandings of their

work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Guiding interview questions and topics were identified and are attached in Appendix A. Approval for the study was granted by the University of Lethbridge Human Participant Research Committee on January 18, 2021, and by the Thompson Rivers University Research Ethics Board on February 9, 2021.

Previous attempts to capture the phenomenon of librarian work during the COVID-19 pandemic have been through surveys, which inherently capture a wider breadth of experience; however, we wanted the chance to both probe into the depths of our participants' experiences and to follow up or clarify any points that were raised. While our work contains elements of ethnography, invested as it is in the current culture of academic libraries and the "meanings that its participants ascribe to it" (Asher & Miller, 2011, p. 3), we also draw on the phenomenological tradition of qualitative research, acknowledging that because "we are social and historical beings, our actions come out of the context and situation, the backdrop of history to which they belong" (Fielding, 2017, p. x). The major departure in our approach from either of these traditions is that we acknowledge ourselves as fully entrenched participants in both the culture of academic librarianship and the phenomena of its changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Like Strega and Brown (2015), "we reject not only the possibility of objectivity, but also its usefulness" (p. 9); instead, we ground ourselves in deep knowledge of and commitment to our academic library community. We seek goals of anti-oppressive research: "community-building, empowerment, and more nuanced understandings" (Potts & Brown, 2015, p. 26). We pursued these interviews in part as a liberatory practice, both to connect individual experiences to broader trends and to provide a measure of catharsis through witnessing.

In order to work toward a cohesive picture of academic librarian work, we limited our scope to those working in non-administrative librarian positions at Canadian post-secondary institutions. While the observations of other library workers, such as library technicians or assistants, would undoubtedly be interesting and noteworthy, their work and experiences would be distinct from that of librarians, in part because of the additional struggles faced by this group of workers—often facing greater job insecurity or having to work on-site while librarians continued to work from home. Librarians in administrative positions were also excluded, as we expected—correctly, as it turned out—that relationships with library administration would loom large in many of our participants' responses.

In an effort to recruit a representational cross-section of librarians from Canadian post-secondary institutions, a recruitment email was sent to the following listservs: Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians (CAPAL), Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) Librarians, and Jerome (Alberta Library Association). The researchers also sought participation via Twitter, where both authors are connected to a large network of Canadian academic librarians. Our research strategy was likely inherently attractive to those librarians who wanted to tell their story, as there were no participation incentives offered other than the prospect of a conversation. Some participants explicitly mentioned the unique aspects of their own experience that motivated them to share their story, while others mentioned that they connected with the expressed motivations of our research.

Interviews were split as evenly as possible among three co-investigators and were assigned based both on our availability and to keep the workload distribution even. In a few cases where study participants had prior work relationships with one or more of the investigators, the participant was offered a chance to interview with a different investigator. Because of the potentially sensitive nature of the questions, opportunities for refusal and withdrawal from the study were clearly outlined both in the signed consent form and verbally by the investigators at both the start and the end of interviews. Interviews were conducted via web meeting using Microsoft Teams video software in March and April 2021, generally lasting between 30 and 60 minutes; they were recorded and transcribed by the co-investigators. Transcripts were reviewed for accuracy and assurance of anonymity. Participants were given the option on their initial consent form to review the transcript at this stage; nine participants did so, which resulted in further cursory changes to three of the anonymized transcripts.

The three co-investigators collaborated on determining an inductive coding process for thematic analysis of the anonymized transcripts. As each of us had transcribed our own interviews, we had a thorough familiarity with our own subset of the data and preliminary ideas of the themes. We were then able to read and review the other investigators' transcripts as an initial check to our own ideas against the entire data set. A sample transcript was chosen and coded independently by each of the three co-investigators. These initial codes were discussed and collated to create a preliminary coding structure with identified themes and subthemes. The preliminary structure was tested when each co-investigator coded a third of the interviews with the help of NVivo software. Codes were added, combined or removed in this process through discussion, identification of examples, and mutual agreement. Themes and subthemes were also refined. One of the co-investigators then recoded the entire dataset using this final structure; minor refinements were made during this process, discussed and mutually agreed upon. At this point, one of the co-investigators was compelled to drop out of the project due to encroaching demands of life and work. The two remaining co-investigators forged on in further discussion and dissemination of the findings.

Semantic or surface themes related to the shape of the work and commonalities in the changes our participants experienced were identified during the coding process, as well as latent or underlying themes related to the significance of care and meaning in librarian work. A previous article (McLay Paterson & Eva, 2022) explored the semantic themes in depth, while this article will focus on the latent themes of the centrality of care in librarian work.

Participants and Privacy

Privacy and anonymity of our participants was taken very seriously. In our previous paper on this study (McLay Paterson & Eva, 2022), we chose not to use pseudonyms, as the quotes in that paper contained details about participants' lives and work that could be triangulated to form clues to their identities. In this paper, as the quotes largely reflect affective experiences rather than personal or job details, we have opted to use pseudonyms. Additional details about the participants' lives and jobs have been minimized in this paper to protect their anonymity.

Because of the importance of bringing forward our participants' stories and the identified purpose of our research as a witnessing practice, we have included a large amount of participant quotes in our results reporting. We have attempted to let our participants speak for themselves whenever possible, while we as researchers connect these individual experiences to the larger whole to weave together a holistic story of the importance of care to our work during this time.

Results and Discussion

The results of our study showcase how elements from previous research on library labour and morale (Nardine, 2019; Wood et al., 2020; Ettarh, 2018; Kendrick, 2017; Matteson & Miller, 2013) manifested within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We see a centering of care as both a path for librarian labour and both a cause of and a possible antidote to academic burnout. Interestingly, while Ettarh (2018) correctly identifies that the gendered rhetoric of librarianship as a helping profession is weaponized to reinforce sacrifice from its workers when coupled with vocational awe, our study participants routinely incorporated themselves and their colleagues explicitly into their framing of care within librarian work.

In collegial relationships, care manifested through intentionality: finding time and space to connect with colleagues without opportunities for spontaneous interaction, empathy for others' situations, and teamwork. In terms of library administration, deliberate, transparent communication was framed as a determining factor both in whether the administration was seen to *care* about workers but also in whether they were ultimately seen as *effective* leaders. Finally, participants expressed their desire to direct their energies towards meaningful work, responding to genuine needs rather than supporting traditional modalities and metrics.

Demographic Results

Twenty-one librarians answered the call, and nineteen interviews were completed during March and April 2021. Participants came from across Canada, representing 17 different post-secondary institutions. Fourteen of our participants were women and five were men, which is consistent with the gender identity ratios reported by the CAPAL *2018 Census of Academic Librarians* (2019), where 73.58% respondents identified as women, 24.20% as men, and less than 1% as non-binary or other genders. Eleven participants were tenured or permanent employees, while the remainder were tenure-/permanent-track. While all career stages in terms of years of experience were represented in the study, only permanent and permanent-track librarians responded to the call; the experience of librarians with precarious or temporary employment during COVID-19 is therefore not captured by our study.

Collegial Relationships

Interpersonal relationships were mentioned by all of our participants as having been affected by remote work; however, participants were divided in their attitudes towards these effects. As expected, many of those interviewed mentioned the difficulties of

maintaining personal relationships as a result of working at home. Hannah, an early-career librarian, at a mid-size institution, spoke frankly:

> Well, colleagues...it sucks! Because we can't run to each other's offices… I really miss that. We tended to do that, a few colleagues and myself...something would happen or whatever and we'd... run to the office...can I vent for five minutes? And so...we've done that a couple of times but it's so much less spontaneous... <mimes typing> can you meet for five minutes, and then do the screen thing.... So, though, you know, we have tried, I feel like we have missed out on each other.

Among those who found maintaining interpersonal relationships difficult during COVID-19, the lack of opportunities for serendipitous chit-chat was most frequently posited as the cause. Those in separate work groups, who one would normally just see in passing in the halls, at various service points, or in a break room, were no longer available for casual conversation. Alicia, a participant at a small library, said, "now when we meet, it's just limited to business, I find, unless there's a couple of people that happen to log in a couple of minutes early…there's just less of a social aspect to interacting with colleagues."

However, remote work combined with the collective grief and stress of COVID-19 also lead to some surprising upsides in cultivating collegiality. Particularly among smaller work teams, participants grew closer with colleagues by weathering shared experiences. In the words of Celeste, a librarian working in a close team environment:

> So, our team...we've grown actually much closer to one another. We were always close and worked really well together, and I think we all really enjoy each other as people. But they became some of the only people aside from my immediate family and my mom and my dad that I talked to on a weekly or even more frequent basis…So I think it became like a real lifeline for people, this team. So, we talk way more about our personal lives than we did before….We really leaned on each other and that was one of the things that has been kind of good. I feel really like they're such wonderful colleagues. I feel really grateful to have them.

For our participants, successful work relationships during COVID meant building community through nurturing shared perspectives, situations, or even hardships. Caitlyn, a librarian from a large research university, told us, "it's almost like, not so much misery loves company, but we're in this boat together and we're trying our best to keep each other afloat." While many participants discussed scheduling coffee chats or meetings with close colleagues, there were occasionally more formal groups developed to cultivate solidarity, such as this one described by Jana, a librarian at a large research university:

> I started posting [regular] support group chats or we just get together and we're like, what are the shitty issues you're dealing with right now? And you can talk about work or you can talk about other stuff, but it's meant to be really informal,

> just a place for people to air their grievances, because they feel so disconnected from the larger library and from our team.

The common thread linking our participants' experiences of interpersonal relationships during COVID was the need to be intentional and deliberate in seeking out specific meetings and relationships. While Todorinova (2021), in her survey of public services librarians during COVID-19, found a similar split between respondents who were nostalgic for chance encounters during the work day and those who were happy with the "substitutes" (p. 785), our study participants, no matter their attitude, connected the evolution of collegial relationships with the intentionality now needed to maintain them. These intentional strategies support the findings of both Hudson-Vitale and Waltz (2020) and Martyniuk et al. (2021) who recommended "facilitating frequent socio-emotional contacts between group members" (Hudson-Vitale & Waltz, 2020, p. 495). For some, this need for intentionality was seen as a barrier to relationships; some participants reported going months without speaking to colleagues that they previously would have seen on a near-daily basis. This change in the patterns of interaction caused some participants to question their overall understanding of social relationships in the work environment. Elena, a librarian whose volume of work increased during COVID, noted:

> When you don't see a decrease in other work responsibilities, it's hard to add this extra meeting of informal...that before, even though I'm sure that time would have still been used up talking to my colleagues, just chatting with them, it just feels different, you know what you mean, if it's five minutes here as opposed to an hour in your calendar.

Sloniowski (2016) discusses her experience of librarianship as being one of spending as much or more of her time managing the emotions of others, rather than clearing concrete tasks; she concurs with Hochschild (2012/1983) that these emotional labour tasks are wearing on workers. The sudden advent of social interaction by choice rather than proximity allowed some of our participants to opt out of interactions which they had previously considered stressful or draining.

On the other hand, the bulk of our participants tended to frame interpersonal relationships with colleagues as bound up with, if not inextricable from, both their job duties and ultimately their performance. Baissette and McGowan (2020) build on Sloniowski's points to call for affective labour tasks to be more acknowledged in academia: that "it is integral to our work, we do our best work because of it" (p. 146). Andrew, an early-career librarian in our study, pointed to personal relationships as the basis for efficient work relationships:

> It's difficult; there are new people in the library, I have no relationship with them, and that has never been the case. When I came to the library I made a point of having coffee with everybody who worked there, which took forever and I drank a lot of coffee. But it was really helpful. I had a shorthand with everybody. And…that's always been an important way for me to work… I mean, all of us, I'm sure, but for me it was intentional and comprehensive.

Others framed isolating work situations as contributing factors to feeling frustrated and overwhelmed. Matthew, a mid-career librarian from a large research institution, said:

> Somehow seeing your colleagues and working with your colleagues and chatting with your colleagues, that added an element that's gone now, and I found that made the job, you know, less complex, less overwhelming….I find it's made me feel a little bit more isolated, a little bit more dissatisfied.

In addition to intentionality, relationships with colleagues during COVID required an additional layer of delicacy. Those who felt interpersonal relationships waning sometimes noticed accompanying frustrations directed at coworkers and identified additional steps to maintain working relationships. Claire remarked, "I definitely have a much shorter fuse now...so I tend to be a little bit slower sometimes about getting back to people just so that I have time to be like, 'Don't write the first thing that comes to your head.' (laughs)." Aaron, another early-career librarian, acknowledged of communication foibles during COVID, "they're not doing it in the personal way; they are also going through a once in 100-year pandemic."

The dual acknowledgement of the common stressor of COVID-19 with the myriad unique ways that stressor rippled through individual circumstances was noted with gratitude by those who saw themselves as recipients of their colleagues' compassion. Krista, a mid-career librarian, spoke of a homeschooling situation where her child was a perennial fixture during virtual meetings: "I'm one of only [a few] that have young kids, so it's not like it's the norm. At the same time...people were super understanding". Consideration for colleagues with unique family situations was ubiquitous throughout the interviews. The parents who participated in our study found benefits to working from home, but many of these benefits stemmed from identifying more convenient intersections between work and childcare responsibilities and were contingent upon empathy and understanding from their colleagues. Claire, an early-career librarian who has no dependents in her own household, remarked:

> one of our coworkers who is not technically, but functionally a single parent… was very overwhelmed; and so all of us tried to sort of help where we could…. And that was all very much COVID-related because, you know, you've got [children who can't go to school].

Gray (2021) writes that "we demonstrate care by recognizing and prioritizing our relationships to each other within and beyond the institution, and we recognize our responsibilities to each other and the power we hold" (p. 2). The evident care for colleagues, as well as understanding shown for the various circumstances in which we all live and work, was a pleasant discovery in this research. Teamwork was often mentioned along with an accompanying appreciation for caring work relationships. In the words of Maria, an early-career librarian, "being able to see how folks are stepping up and stepping in and standing by one another in a team just makes me feel like whatever comes to us in the future just feels like peanuts".

However, this compassion and care for colleagues at times took a toll on librarians who were concerned with letting their colleagues down. Sloniowski (2016) writes of affective library labour that "rethinking the supply of love as a form of labor is in itself a particularly subversive political and theoretical move" (p. 133). Though the bulk of our study participants were committed to caring for their colleagues, they mostly framed this care as an addition rather than a part of their regular workloads. Some, like Melanie, another early-career librarian, pointed to this urge as stemming from and contributing to people and projects they consider important:

> I guess one thing that I think about often about the workload is like when my colleagues try and say, "don't work on the weekend, don't work in the evening" and I think about the work that I'm actually doing, I think of who cares about it, and I don't do this work because of capitalism, like expecting me to do it, or because, like my boss wants me to or whatever; I think I feel so compelled to work all the time because if it's a project that I really care about, or a project that someone else really cares about, and I want them to be happy, it just makes it so hard to let someone down.

Often this led to people feeling overwhelmed and unable to say no. Elena told us, "So, it's just, everything is just busy; I always feel like I don't have enough time or that I'm letting people down when I'm not getting things done in a certain amount of time."

Nonetheless, some of our participants pointed to a widening gulf between those in librarian positions and other types of library workers, such as technicians or assistants. For example, in many of our participants' institutions, staff in non-librarian positions were often called back to work in the library building long before their librarian colleagues. Andrew told us, "I can't imagine what it's like to have been told that it's more important for you to be there than not be there. And they didn't get a pay raise, they're not getting danger pay, they're not even at the front of the queue to get vaccines, they're not considered an essential worker, right? So, if you're not considered an essential worker, what are you doing working?" These frontline workers often had less job security and fewer mechanisms to voice displeasure or objection to policies or working conditions. Glusker et al (2022) found in their interviews with academic library support staff that the librarian-staff divide had a high impact on their study participants, second only to the relationship with their direct supervisor. However, while the staff surveyed in Glusker's (2022) study pointed to ill-treatment by or lack of advocacy from librarians as a primary cause of low morale, about half of our study participants expressed explicit concern in our interviews for those staff who they felt were more vulnerable both in terms of health risk and job security, and many of these participants took additional actions, such as letter-writing or advocacy to library administration, to try to ensure they felt supported. However, many of our participants felt that empathy or even advocacy alone is not enough to build these relationships in the face of an objective privilege gap. In the words of Matthew, "when it involves support staff who…are being paid on an hourly basis, can you ask for half an hour of their time just for a casual conversation? It's trickier, right?"

Relationships with Administration

Relationships with library administration were one of the most discussed themes throughout our interviews with all participants. For many, support, direction, communication, and transparency from their administration was a primary factor in their overall assessment of their experiences working during COVID, which is consistent with findings from recent studies on librarian burnout (Kendrick, 2017; Weyant et al., 2021). Unfortunately for our study participants, relationships with their administrations were rarely improved by the circumstances, and often made worse. Many library administrators became more silent than usual, making decisions without input or transparency. Some participants like Jana connected this lack of transparency not only to lack of morale but to a detrimental effect on their own productivity:

> I'm...just feeling like very, not only very like exhausted by the whole thing, but also like very discouraged with administration, and decisions being made and it's kind of hard to give a shit, to be honest, [laughs] when you just feel like people are making decisions that are not like in the best interest of staff, or there's no transparency.

At times, there was a lack of consultation even regarding issues that were seen as affecting both the safety and comfort of workers. As a prime example, multiple participants mentioned their libraries' reopening, and in some cases, such as Celeste's, allowing food and drink, during the second and third COVID waves:

> ...there was zero consultation about that with people working on site, which to me is totally crazy, like that, like that should not…there should have been consultation with people even if it is, "this needs to happen because of XYZ reason; what can we do to make you feel more comfortable? How can we mitigate the impact on you," right? But there is none of that. There was not even a direct communication to those people.

As Salvesen and Berg (2021), Hudson-Vitale and Walsh (2020), and Martyniuk et al. (2021) pointed out, a supportive administration is key to the affective experience of work during COVID, both in terms of infrastructure and in careful communication. Unfortunately for many libraries, the hesitancy of libraries to adequately communicate in large crises (O'Neill & Kelley, 2021) may extend to their own workers, leaving many of them feeling confused or adrift. Even without a major instigating event such as sudden, poorly communicated policy decisions, the lack of communication altogether was interpreted by some participants as a factor in degrading relationships. Jason, a librarian from a mid-size institution, told us:

> It's more difficult to think badly of people and expect the worst of them when you're talking to them in person, face-to-face. If there's no communication, it seems too easy for relationships to really break down.

Some of our participants were inclined to give concession to the extreme stress and urgency under which decisions needed to be made, even as they felt increasingly

strained by the lack of transparency. In this way, our study diverges from Todorinova's (2021) results, where the majority of survey participants reported adequate opportunity to give input and provide feedback in pandemic-related decisions. Caitlyn commented of her administration, "I mean, I know they're working around the clock and I feel for...what they have to deal with so I try not to put any more added burden or questions on them…." Administration was not exempt from the empathy so many of our participants cultivated when dealing with colleagues, but there were limits to how far that trust was extended, when as Caitlyn continued, "we see probably less of the process that goes into decision making and we see less of the internal workings of that." In institutions where there were existing communication problems or there was already a lack of trust, the pandemic often exposed or exacerbated these issues. As an example, Jason openly speculated that, "It seemed to me that those making these decisions used the crisis as a means of implementing changes that perhaps had been desired for some time, though were contentious."

Clearly, more transparency around decision making processes, and more communication around rationales for those decisions, is a need both during and outside of a pandemic. This conclusion is supported by O'Neill and Kelley's (2021) findings on library crisis communication where lack of transparent communication, however minor, can breed distrust.

In those rare situations where there was an improved relationship with library administration, it hinged on deliberate, concerted efforts by the administration to improve transparency and cultivate open communication with workers. Jeannette, a mid-career librarian in this situation, said:

> There's definitely, I think, more communication now than pre-. Maybe not hugely, but I think our administration had communication as a huge priority pre-COVID and I think that is just maybe continued on and…accelerated a little bit. But we have regular all staff meetings like we did before, but I think we have them more now so that, as things keep changing, everyone's sort of aware of what's happening.

Others tried to be more available, with varying levels of appreciation felt by the interviewees. Bethany, an early-career librarian, told us:

> …there was, I think, a real concerted effort on the part of library management and our department head... to really support people, to help them stay connected, to ensure that people didn't feel alone, if they were really struggling and caught off guard and, I think those efforts were really beneficial and they were beneficial to me.

The ability to feel like one's voice is heard and opinions sought is a critical component to feeling like administrators are not making decisions in a vacuum. Those who took the time to ask for input and feedback from staff were seen in a much more positive light than those who made decisions apparently without consultation.

Like most relationships, little is all good or all bad. But a major theme of the responses was the absolute need for open, honest communication and transparency on the part of administrators; periods of radio silence, our participants posited, can do a lot to erode previously established trust. The ability to communicate, to show responsiveness to and care about worker needs and anxieties was inextricably linked to the overall effectiveness of library administration as leaders. In the words of Celeste:

> Sometimes I think our University Librarian has, like, recognized, I need to lead, like I need to just email people, even if there's no information to be conveyed. Just like, hey, I'm thinking of you, you guys are doing a great job…. Like kudos to this. Kudos to that. So that's really good. There have also been periods where there have been major questions and there has been little communication, and that has caused…I think that's been quite damaging.

In combination with other pandemic stressors, some of our attendees felt their relationship with administration had eroded far past the point where formerly some more consideration might have been given. Jana summed up her feelings:

> Before when I felt like I would be more prone to give them the benefit of the doubt or to rely on getting more information before we react to something, now I'm just like, I have zero faith in them to make the right decision, to consult with staff...So, I definitely feel like my relationship with administration has degraded. Yeah, I just expect way less from them. And I would also say that I have, personally I feel a much more adversarial relationship with them than I did before, but that's just the decisions that they've made. And the way they conduct themselves I don't think really engender as much like respect or trust among, among the staff.

Reopening the library to the public is unfortunately not a reset to whatever levels of trust and communication existed pre-COVID. The experiences of library workers during the pandemic, especially their relationships with administration, will continue to have ramifications long after universities have reopened.

Meaningful Work

Though most librarians in our study did not see their jobs as particularly entwined with their physical campus or building, many found themselves questioning the meaningfulness of their work amid a landscape of confusion, burnout, and changing priorities. In our previous paper on this study (McLay Paterson & Eva, 2022), we discussed how librarians during the COVID-19 pandemic saw an expansion in behind-the-scenes preparation work and infrastructure maintenance; on the flip side of that, many anxieties about meaningful work clustered around outreach duties. Hicks (2016) demonstrated how pre-pandemic library advocacy efforts are often enmeshed with visibility and library-as-place; however, many participants involved in outreach were inclined to question these priorities and how value is currently defined in relation to their own work. Caitlyn summed up her thoughts on the situation:

> If you're an 18 year old, why are you going to be like “I'm going to zoom into this library event” when you've got the whole internet to keep you occupied? And I understand where the library is coming from because they want to create a sense of community and then they want something to put on the annual report, they want to help show something, but in my mind I'm thinking, well, this, this is just adding another thing for the student to hear about and then dismiss, or more work for us to try and promote and then it doesn't come to anything; so can we focus on, once again the resources and services that only we offer, like making curbside really good or answering those assignment questions right away?

The implication here that the state of virtual outreach during COVID, in contrast to pre-pandemic initiatives, may subvert actual community needs in order to have “something to put on the annual report” was echoed by other librarians in our study. Pagowsky’s (2021) comments about one-shot library instruction—that the “pressure of doing quantitatively more to prove value” (p. 302) is harmful to both student learning and librarian sustainability—could easily apply here to outreach. Arellano Douglas (2020) writes that enriching assessment of library services “requires an approach that prioritizes care over justification, connection over reporting, and people over products” (p. 47). This approach requires a certain amount of flexibility in response to circumstances in order to prioritize care and to account for the changing needs of librarians, staff, and patrons. Hannah expressed that “the pressure to come up with new programming and new ideas...really just feels so fruitless in this world right now... and so yes, it is frustrating.”

While participants commonly expressed that most of their basic job functions could be performed online, many librarians involved in outreach suggested that physical presence was vital for that role. Paul, a mid-career librarian, summed up the differences pre- and post-COVID:

> With my outreach I would physically go to these [student spaces] and I'd hang out and I was visible, and students would come up to me and say hey, can I talk to you [Librarian]? And even if a student didn't ask a question they’d say oh, so you're here every week. Well, I've got a question. I'll come back next week, or they’d come to my office. So just a physical presence was an important part of outreach. Well since last March I have created those same hours but over Zoom…but nobody has taken me up on it. So that has dropped. I think the students are still making appointments, but when it's convenient for them, but the drop-in hours, they don't work over Zoom.

The drive to do meaningful work was a recurring theme among our participants, as well as a resulting frustration when they perceived themselves as being cut off from the ability to make an impact. Melanie expressed that “it's harder to feel like the work I'm doing is important, so to do such a volume without really seeing, like what's the point of this, it...makes me feel more tired about it.” Committee work during COVID, particularly those committees that were mandated or “volun-told”, was characterized as a particular nexus of frustration. Bisaillon et al. (2020) reinforced that “women’s extensive engagement in academic service work comes to displace activities that are more readily

visible and tangibly auditable," (p. 146) and furthermore, during COVID, our participants felt the strain of feeling like they were only involved to fill a seat.

Melanie pointed to a difference "between being on a committee and actually doing work for that committee right? There's a big difference there and it bothers me to not be able... I don't want to just take up space, I want to have a purpose." There was a sense that these committees were created to fill a perceived deficit in workload, rather than an actual need. Elena summed up her committee work thusly:

> I never felt like my work was that productive or helpful…my contributions, pardon me. Not that the committee wasn't helpful, but my contributions weren't that helpful. And sometimes it just kind of felt like busy work, like do you really need eight or 10 people on this committee, or are you just trying to say that you're, you know, getting lots of involvement?

Much of the tension between what our participants perceived as meaningful work and busy work or filling time was complicated by a need to prove both their own value and the value of the library. Many participants perceived a growing tension between what they saw as meaningful about their work and what library administration saw as valuable, echoing the tension described by Seale and Mirza (2020) between affective labour and irrational value metrics. Some participants pointed to a tendency to cling to traditional methods and modalities, which were unsuited to the pandemic climate. For example, Claire shared her experience working at an in-person service desk during COVID:

> We were scheduled in on rotation. We were supposed to sit for half-days, but we had to be there for [longer]. No one ever really made it clear why. And it was ridiculous because the students who booked to come…they were looking for a place to study. So I, in the [time] we were open, I worked two shifts and had three questions, two of which were about where the bathroom was, and one of which was something about the booking system.

Emmelhainz et al. (2017) write that behavioural expectations at in-person service desks, which prioritize librarian availability over skills, reinforce the idea that the librarian exists primarily to "meet the emotional needs of others" (p. 37). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic represents an opportunity to challenge the audit culture that Almeida (2020) writes as having "colonized so much of our work and our time" (p. 7), as many of the metrics which libraries have traditionally put forth as measurements of value were revealed to be largely centred around our physical building. Caitlyn suggested that there was a failure, if not a refusal, to adapt to community needs and priorities. Speaking about the pressure to provide virtual programming, she said:

> It was, I think, OK or doable for the first couple of months. Although it was chaotic, it was like, well, you're just trying your best. But now that we've kind of understood where students are coming from or faculty are coming from, it's like let's work with that and not start offering a myriad of whatever it is just because it looks good, because it's really, really difficult to do.

Lack of recognition of skills in what are seen as more generalist librarian positions was also mentioned by librarians in our study, which could be read as a concurrence with Revitt's (2020) observation of traditionally gendered labour being regarded as "less complex; requiring less specialized training, skill, or expertise" (p. 136), which in turn diminishes its value. Elena discussed her library's hiring of short-term contracts into liaison roles:

> It's like a devaluing of the work that we do which influences our morale...it's a library administration thing, it's a university administration thing, and it's our provincial government, so they all kind of work together to make you feel like the work you do is not particularly valued.

Some participants pointed to the lack of visibility in their work as a source of anxiety. Aaron's work situation was a case-in-point of Popowich's (2019) observations that the "difficulty we have in recognizing immaterial labour as work" (p. 161) is further complicated by tensions between different types of library workers. Aaron commented:

> We have a historical misunderstanding at the library about the work that librarians versus technicians do. And I think that's been...that misunderstanding has been widened with the work from home, and I don't think it's because they think we're not doing anything, but they just don't see our work in the first place as much. And now it's even more. They don't see it as work, right? So, that's been a challenge.

Leanne, an early-career librarian in a large research university, added:

> I've often felt a need to prove that I'm working;... it's just this feeling of like, needing to prove my value in this context where there's funding cuts, and there is all this stuff happening, and also prove my value because the work is not as visible….it's like, we could get into this being a capitalist trap right, where it's this need to produce and produce, and I think it's so much easier to get into that headspace when you are working alone and isolated in your home, and not with colleagues around.

Arellano Douglas (2020) believes that libraries—and librarians, by extension—have accepted a fear-based assessment culture, where we must demonstrate our value to external audiences, despite a capitalist agenda anathema to stated librarian values. Perhaps librarians can look to the slow librarianship movement (see Glassman, 2017; Farkas, 2021) for some measure of relief from the overriding productivity culture: taking a stand to "support more reflective and responsive practices" (Glassman, 2017). However, for many of our participants, anxiety about proving their value was accompanied by self-professed difficulty in saying no. Leanne commented that she already has "difficulty saying no, but it's even tougher to say no now to projects that fall across my desk; and also... the fact that I'm tenure-track adds that extra layer of stress to not be able to say no to things." Being tenure-/permanent-track or relatively new to the profession was cited by Hannah as a reason to "say yes to everything;" Melanie characterized drawing boundaries as a learned skill: "the people that I know that have

some semblance of balance, it kind of seems like they're very good at saying no. And I don't know how to do that yet." Nicholson's (2019) work on librarian perceptions of time would suggest that Hannah and Melanie's situations are all too common; only 2 of 24 participants in her study did not report feeling overworked.

Unsurprisingly, many participants acknowledged downfalls to the service-oriented nature of library work. While many envisioned a return to normal as returning to campus and enjoying life as they did pre-COVID, often there were comments about using the situation as an opportunity to re-envision what normal should be. Ettarh (2018, "Awe," para. 2) encapsulates the plight of library workers facing burnout while still remaining devoted to their work:

> In the face of grand missions of literacy and freedom, advocating for your full lunch break feels petty. And tasked with the responsibility of sustaining democracy and intellectual freedom, taking a mental health day feels shameful. Awe is easily weaponized against the worker, allowing anyone to deploy a vocational purity test in which the worker can be accused of not being devout or passionate enough to serve without complaint.

Elena remarked:

> We are so, the libraries are just so committed to providing everything to everyone at all times. We're so service oriented. We never want to say no. And it's just getting to the point where it's not sustainable. And we have to recognize that sometimes what the students might want is just not going to be good for our staff to do.

Gray (2021) writes that "care is not an unambiguous good; it is not even necessarily neutral. We must ask what our care is being deployed in the service of" (p. 8). Similarly, Sloniowski (2016) contends that librarians struggle to find time for work they consider impactful because "our service work is considered more useful to the corporate goals of the university" (p. 661). An adaptive, flexible academic library with a fulfilled librarian workforce requires enabling time and support for librarian choices about how best to serve changing community needs.

For all the difficulties both in carving out the time for meaningful work and in communicating that value to their administration, many of our participants expressed a deep appreciation for their core roles. Jeannette, who has worked at her institution for quite a few years, said:

> I still like being a librarian and I still feel like I'm valued, not necessarily by my university administration, but by my colleagues, for our ability to sort of work in this environment and still be present. So, I still feel positively about my work.

Participants who discussed their love of and the meaning in their work were adamant about acknowledging the inherent labour of it. Celeste commented through her exhaustion that, "this constant imperative to, like, produce, produce, produce no matter what situation you're in, no matter what stress you're under. Like, I don't want to be part

of that anymore." While our study reinforces previous testimonies that care is central to library work, the path forward for libraries requires that library workers be explicitly included and factored into those relationships of care.

Conclusion

In the words of Jana, one of the silver linings of the pandemic is that it forced us to look at how (and where) we work, and to acknowledge that what works for one may not work for another:

> And so, what I would love is if we just took this past year as evidence that, you know, people work in all sorts of different ways, and people are productive in all sorts of different ways, and we should be having conversations with people about kind of what they need to be engaged and successful and happy with their work.

Almost every interviewee was quick to acknowledge their privilege and the fact that they were able to maintain their jobs while many others (including some in their own libraries) were not. Social justice issues, coupled with concern for students, and for frontline co-workers, was at the fore; participants advocated throughout for measures that supported emergent community needs—including those of library workers—such as extending flexibility, support, and open communication during a time of collective grief. Carrying on in the usual modes was not shown to be beneficial to user communities and was often actively detrimental to the capacities and morale of library workers.

Many of our participants felt the pandemic highlighted change needed at a systemic level; after all, it is not only during COVID that librarians, staff, students, and community members experience private griefs and personal challenges (or even preferences!) that should be structurally supported by flexible and compassionate policies and practices For most libraries, that will mean at minimum a thoughtful ongoing approach to work from home but also a larger reevaluation of where resources are directed. The COVID situation seemed to allow most to step back and question what had always been accepted practice in the library, at their institutions, and in society in general.

While participants re-committed to the caring aspects of their work, manifesting through intentional, collegial relationships and transparent communication, many participants either took new steps to guard their own time and sanity or gained new consciousness of the lack of needed boundaries in their work-life. Additionally, factors such as the administrative negligence observed by Kendrick (2017) and the lack of communication that emerged in our study can exacerbate the toll of emotional labour (Matteson & Miller, 2013). Implications of this study on library governance will be explored in a future paper. Genuine care in libraries requires consideration for the needs of the entire community, including library workers. Only by uncoupling vocational awe (Ettarh, 2018) from our conceptions of librarian duties as work can we begin to move toward properly valued and supported labours of care.

Acknowledgements

The authors enthusiastically acknowledge the many contributions of our co-investigator Mary Greenshields, who formed an equal part of the initial planning and data collection for this study. Mary, you have our full support in your new position and in all your adventures!

The authors gratefully acknowledge the generous gift of time and candor provided by all of the research participants; this work would of course not be possible without them and their willingness to be open, honest, and forthcoming. It was a joy speaking to each and every one of them.

References

Allison-Cassin, S. (2020). Bodies, brains, and machines: An exploration of the relationship between the material and affective states of librarians and information systems. *Library Trends 68*(3), 409–430.

Almeida, N. (2020). The labour of austerity: Absurdity, performative resistance, and cultural transformation. *Canadian Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *6*, 1–25.

American Library Association. (2012). *Diversity counts*.

Anderson, D., & Kelliher, C. (2020). Enforced remote working and the work-life interface during lockdown. *Gender in Management, 35*(7/8), 677–683.

Arellano Douglas, V. (2020). Moving from critical assessment to assessment as care.*Communications in Information Literacy, 14*(1), 46–65.

Asher, A., & Miller, S. (2011). *So you want to do anthropology in your library? Or, A practical guide to ethnographic research in academic libraries*. The ERIAL Project.

Bessette, L. S., & McGowan, S. (2020). Affective labor and faculty development: COVID-19 and dealing with the emotional fallout. *Journal on Centers for Teaching and Learning, 12,* 136–148.

Bisaillon, L., Cattapan, A., Driessen, A., van Duin, E., Spruit, S., Anton, L., & Jecker, N. S. (2020). Doing academia differently: “I needed self-help less than I needed a fair society.” *Feminist Studies*, *46*(1), 130–157.

Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians. (2019, March 25). *2018 census of academic librarians: User guide and results summary*.

Canadian Association of University Teachers. (2017). Librarians in Canada's universities and colleges. *CAUT Education Review*.

Emmelhainz, C., Pappas, E. & Seale, M. (2017). Behavioral expectations for the mommy librarian: The successful reference transaction as emotional labor. In M. Accardi (Ed.), *The feminist reference desk: Concepts, critiques, and conversations* (pp. 27–45). Library Juice Press.

Ettarh, F. (2018). Vocational awe and librarianship: The lies we tell ourselves. *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*.

Fielding, H. A. (2017). A feminist phenomenology manifesto. In H. A. Fielding & D. E. Olkowski (Eds.), *Feminist phenomenology futures* (pp. vii–xxiii). Indiana University Press.

Farkas, M. (2021, October 18). What is slow librarianship? *Information wants to be free.*

Gaudet, S., Marchand, I., Bujaki, M. & Bourgeault, I. L. (2022). Women and gender equity in academia through the conceptual lens of care. *Journal of Gender Studies, 31*(1), 74–86.

Glassman, J. (2017). The innovation fetish and slow librarianship: What librarians can learn from the Juicero. *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*.

Glusker, A., Emmelhainz, C., Estrada, N., & Dyess, B. (2022). "Viewed as equals": The impacts of library organizational cultures and management on library staff morale. *Journal of Library Administration, 62*(2), 153–189.

Gray, B. C. (2021). The university cannot love you: Gendered labour, burnout, and the COVID-19 pivot to digital. In G. Veletsianos & S. Koseoglu (Eds.), *Feminist critical digital pedagogy: An open book.* EdTech Books.

Hernandez, T., & Abigail, Y. (2020). Remote workers during the COVID-19 lockdown: What are we missing and why is important. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 62*(11), e669–e672.

Hicks, D. (2016). Advocating for librarianship: The discourses of advocacy and service in the professional identities of librarians. *Library Trends 64*(3), 615–640.

Hochschild, A. R. (2012). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. University of California Press (Original work published 1983).

Hudson-Vitale, C., & Waltz, R. M. (2020). Caring for our colleagues: Wellness and support strategies for remote library teams. *College & Research Libraries News*, *81*(10), 494–497.

Ismael, J., Lazzaro, A. E., & Ishihara, B. (2021). It takes heart: The experiences and working conditions of caring educators. *Radical Teacher, 119*(30), 30–40.

Joe, J. (2019). A perspective on emotional labor in academic libraries. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *45*(1), 66–67.

Julien, H., & Genuis, S. K. (2009). Emotional labour in librarians' instructional work. *Journal of Documentation*, *65*(6), 926–937.

Kendrick, K. D. (2017). The low morale experience of academic librarians: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Library Administration, 57*(8), 846–878.

Martyniuk, J., Moffatt, C., & Oswald, K. (2021). Into the unknown: Onboarding early career professionals in a remote work environment. *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research*, *16*(1), 1–11.

Matteson, M. L., & Miller, S. S. (2013). A study of emotional labor in librarianship. *Library and Information Science Research*, *35*(1), 54–62.

McLay Paterson, A., & Eva, N. (2022). "Always at work": Canadian academic librarian work during COVID-19. *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research, 17(*2).

Minello, A., Martucci, S., & Manzo, L. K. C. (2020). The pandemic and the academic mothers: Present hardships and future perspectives. *European Societies, 23*(Sup 1), S82–S94.

Nardine, J. T. (2019). The state of academic liaison librarian burnout in ARL Libraries in the United States. *College & Research Libraries, 80*(4), 508–524.

Nicholson, K. (2019). "Being in time": New public management, academic librarians, and the temporal labor of pink-collar public service work. *Library Trends, 68*(2), 130–152.

Nicholson, K. P. (2021). Spatial thinking, gender and immaterial affective labour in the post-Fordist academic library. *Journal of Documentation, 78*(1).

O'Neill, B., & Kelley, R. (2021). Delivering bad news: Crisis communication methods in academic libraries. *College & Research Libraries, 82*(3), 310.

Pagowsky, N. (2021). The contested one-shot: Deconstructing power structures to imagine new futures. *College & Research Libraries, 82*(3), 300–309.

Popowich, S. (2019). "The power of knowledge, objectified": Immaterial labor, cognitive capitalism, and academic librarianship. *Library Trends, 68*(2), 153–173.

Potts, K. L. & Brown, L. (2015). Becoming an anti-oppressive researcher. In S. Strega & L. Brown (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Revisiting critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches* (2nd ed., pp. 1–16). Canadian Scholars Press.

Revitt, E. J. (2020). The academic librarian as the subaltern: An institutional ethnography of a feminized profession [Ph.D thesis]. University of Alberta.

Rodger, J., & Erickson, N. (2021). The emotional labour of public library work. *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library & Information Practice & Research*, *16*(1), 1–27.

Salvesen, L., & Berg, C. (2021). "Who says I am coping": The emotional affect of New Jersey academic librarians during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *47*(5).

Santamaria, M. R. (2020). Concealing white supremacy through fantasies of the library: Economies of affect at work. *Library Trends, 68*(3), 431–449.

Seale, M. & Mirza, R. (2020). "The coin of love and virtue: Academic libraries and value in a global pandemic." *Canadian Journal of Academic Librarianship, 6* (December), 1–30.

Shuler, S., & Morgan, N. (2013). Emotional labor in the academic library: When being friendly feels like work. *The Reference Librarian, 54*(2), 118–133.

Sloniowski, L. (2016). Affective labor, resistance, and the academic librarian. *Library Trends, 64*(4), 645–666.

Strega, S., & Brown, L. (2015). From resistance to resurgence. In S. Strega & L. Brown (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Revisiting critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches* (2nd ed., pp. 1–16). Canadian Scholars Press.

Todorinova, L. (2021). One year in: A survey of public services librarians on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Library Administration, 61*(7), 776–792.

Weyant, E. C., Wallace, R. L., & Woodward, N. J. (2021). Contributions to low morale, part 1: Review of existing literature on librarian and library staff morale. *Journal of Library Administration*, *61*(7), 854–868.

Wood, B. A., Guimaraes, A. B., Holm, C. E., Hayes, S. W., & Brooks, K. R. (2020). Academic librarian burnout: A survey using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI). *Journal of Library Administration, 60*(5), 512–531.

Appendix

Guiding Interview Questions

Before Starting:

- Review consent form and purpose of study
- Ask for any questions
- Start recording

Demographic questions:

Gender:

Employment status (i.e. tenured/permanent, probationary, limited term, part-time):

Length of time at current workplace:

Position Title:

How many members are in your household?

- Number of dependents:

Tell me briefly about your position at the library.

Initial Response

Tell me about your library's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. What were the most immediate changes made?

- Your role in these changes?
- Feelings about these changes?
- Has your library been affected by layoffs or furloughs? If so, how did these affect you, either personally or in your work performance?

Now:

What is your work situation now?

- Do you work primarily from home? The office? Elsewhere?
- Tell me about your work hours now.
- What is your daily schedule like? How many hours do you typically work in a week?

- Comparison to pre-COVID

- Describe any changes in your living situation in terms of members in your household? Do they work from home, outside the home, do domestic labor, or attend school?

- Have the changes described above affected your own work? If so, in what way(s)?

What are your library's plans for re-opening? What is your expected role? How will it impact your work schedule/location?

Tell me about one of your job duties that you spend MORE time on now than you did before COVID

Tell me about one of your job duties that you spend LESS time on now

Since COVID-19, have you been asked to take on any new duties that were not previously part of your workload?

- How or why did these duties fall to you?

- How do they fit with the rest of your workload?

- Did you require any additional training?

Tell me about how COVID-19 has affected your relationship and communication with colleagues

Tell me about how COVID-19 has affected your relationship and communication with administration

When I say the phrase "back to normal" what is the first thing you think of?

How do you feel about your job now?

Is there anything else you'd like to share about how COVID has impacted your workload? and /or your relationship with your work?

Debrief:

- Remind participant about various supports and withdrawal procedures