

Changing Roles of Librarians and Library Technicians

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Abstract

What significant changes are librarians and library technicians experiencing in their roles? A survey put forward across Canada to librarians and library technicians addressing this question was conducted in February 2014. Eight hundred eighty-two responses were obtained from librarians, defined as MLIS graduates, and library technicians, defined as graduates from a two-year library diploma program. Respondents needed to have been employed in the last two years in these roles and students of either an MLIS or LIT program were also welcome to participate. The results suggest that both librarians and library technicians perceive their roles as growing in scope and complexity and that the lines of responsibility are blurring. A majority of respondents indicated that they perceive a change in their roles in the past five years and commented on what the perceived changes were. Librarian and library technician roles may be shifting away from what may be viewed as traditional or clearly defined responsibilities and both librarians and library technicians may be taking on new tasks as well as experiencing task overlap. All library staff will need to be fluid, adaptable, and open to change. Library school curricula and workplace training need to incorporate the development of these competencies.

Introduction

What significant changes are librarians and library technicians experiencing in their roles? The research team asked those working in the library field about their roles and their perceptions of how their roles and responsibilities may be changing and evolving. A research survey was conducted in February 2014 to uncover in detail how roles are perceived to have changed in libraries in recent years. The investigators were surprised by the overwhelming response to the survey and what appeared to be a high level of interest in these issues.

There were two parts to the survey, the first of which is analyzed in this paper. The first part examined primary work responsibilities, whether the respondent has a clear understanding of their work responsibilities, and how their particular role may have changed over the last 1 to 5 years. The second part of the survey, the results of which will be disseminated in a separate, future paper, examines library workers' perceptions of the relationship between librarians and library technicians as a result of shifting roles, whether a disconnect is present and if so, what can be done to improve collegiality and workplace productivity.

One important distinction in terminology must be expressed. In Canada, library technician is the widely used job title used to define a graduate from a two-year (on average) diploma program from a recognized institution. The Canadian Library Association's "Guidelines for the Education of Library Technicians" (2011) do not offer a definition, but state that a library technician program "refers to such programs as library studies, library arts and documentation technology, library and information technology, techniques de la documentation" (p. 2). Although in the workplace library technicians may occupy positions with titles like "library assistant", the defining factor of this particular professional role is the diploma education. The above-mentioned Guidelines provide a simple explanation of the role of a technician: "The library technician plays an important role on a library staff, occupying a position with a level of responsibility between that of a clerk and a librarian" (Canadian Library Association, 2011, p. 2).

In the United States, there is less of a connection between the designation "library technician" and formal schooling. The American Library Association (ALA) states:

Training requirements for library technicians vary widely, ranging from a high school diploma to specialized postsecondary training. Some employers only hire individuals who have library work experience or college training related to libraries; others train inexperienced workers on the job. (n.d., para. 3)

Australia is similar to Canada in its delineation between library technicians and untrained library workers. The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) refers to library technicians as having a diploma, which differentiates them from library assistants, who may not have any formal library training (n.d., Qualifications section, para. 1-2).

In much of the literature, library technicians are also called library assistants, technical assistants, and paraprofessionals. In this paper, the term “library technician” will be used when referring to the results of our study. Other terms, such as paraprofessional, will be used in the literature review in accordance with how they are referred to in the literature.

As this research study specifically defined the respondents by their education level, it is necessary to define the term librarian as well. The ALA (n.d.) clearly states that “The master's degree from a program accredited by the American Library Association (or from a master's level program in library and information studies accredited or recognized by the appropriate national body of another country) is the appropriate professional degree for librarians” (para. 2). Thus, for the purposes of this study, librarians are defined as those who have obtained an appropriate master's degree, and library technicians are defined as those who have received an appropriate diploma, both from accredited programs.

As professionals working in the field, the research team has consistently witnessed and discussed changes in library and information settings. However, this study aims to add evidence to anecdote in order to determine if significant role changes are perceived to be occurring within the library field and between both the librarian and library technician roles.

Literature Review

There is minimal research examining changes to the role of the library technician vis-à-vis the librarian. However, most researchers in recent studies have been optimistic about the changes observed to be occurring and support deeper investigations into the changing of roles, blurring of lines, and new competencies required of library technicians, as well as the contemporary roles of librarians.

With regards to public-facing services specifically, paraprofessionals have for some time been moving into roles of greater responsibility or roles consisting of more complex tasks. Dinkins and Ryan's (2010) study at Stetson University in Florida demonstrates that assigning paraprofessionals to the academic reference desk is a common practice which results in no decline in service quality and which frees up librarians for new roles such as virtual reference services, social media initiatives, and information literacy expansion (p. 286). The authors suggest that realignment of traditional library duties is possible (Dinkins & Ryan, p. 286).

Continuing the study of changing roles with regards to public-facing services, Gremmels conducted a review of literature specifically concerning college and university libraries to help identify common features in staffing that could be considered trends. One identified trend, similar to Dinkins and Ryan's study, is reference services being predominantly staffed by paraprofessionals and students (Gremmels, 2013, p. 234). Gremmels (2013) states this is due to a decline in demand for reference services in general, a redeployment of librarians to research consultation roles and information literacy

responsibilities, and budgetary concerns (p. 234). The roles of the paraprofessional are increasing in complexity and therefore so are educational requirements; the author asks “[w]hat comes first, changing roles or changing staffing?” and suggests that it may be difficult to know what to do, advising library leaders to “act boldly but wisely” (Gremmels, 2013, p. 248).

Similarly, in a technical services environment, Cox and Myers (2010) state that changes in professional and paraprofessional roles has been occurring since innovations in technology in the mid-1990s (p. 214). The authors sent a survey to all cataloguers from member libraries of the Association of Research Libraries. From the results, the authors determined cataloguing departments might have seen the greatest shift in roles because of how technology has impacted workflows. Librarians are taking on more administrative duties, leaving paraprofessionals to assume some of the higher level tasks associated with cataloguing that were previously managed by librarians. However, there is some discrepancy as to how roles have been redesigned and it is questionable if paraprofessionals are adequately compensated for their increase in job duties (Cox & Myers, 2010, p. 213). The authors suggest a need for greater investigation into the library profession as a whole as to how paraprofessionals are compensated to ensure fairness and equality between the professions (Cox & Myers, 2010, p. 221).

A subsequent study also focused on changing roles in technical services, specifically for academic library professionals and paraprofessionals. Zhu (2012) conducted a U.S. nationwide survey and lists reasons for change in workloads between librarians and library technicians (specifically in technical services) as being “technological advances, budget cuts, reorganization, downsizing, outsourcing, expanded roles of professionals, and changes in the information world” (p. 127). Librarians and library technicians have largely the same complex duties assigned to them, roles are expanding, and “the lines between professional duties and paraprofessional duties have blurred” (Zhu, 2012, p. 141). A reexamination of workplace roles may be necessary, and traditional delineation may no longer be sufficient. Zhu (2012) suggests a deeper study into the future needs of the library and that greater focus should be on the development of necessary skills, regardless of title (p. 142).

Focusing on intergroup dynamics, Fragola’s (2009) case study conducted on library technicians and librarians at a public library in North Carolina examines the relationship between librarians and library technicians rather than identifying what the changes in roles might be occurring. It is one of very few articles to study the effect on the relationship as a result of the crossover in roles. Fragola (2009) states:

In today’s libraries...workers, most often referred to as paraprofessionals, library technicians, or support staff, perform tasks that were the sole purview of professional librarians in the not-so-distant past. (p. 17)

The study set out to determine if in-group bias was a factor in workplace relationships and if this led to a negative impact on how librarians perceived library technicians. Fragola (2009) discovered that a small amount of in-group bias did exist,

but not to the extent that literature or anecdotal stories may suggest (p. 23). Both parties recognized that there historically had been tension between librarians and library technicians, but felt the tension was overstated and largely not a factor in work relationships or productivity (Fragola, 2009, p. 24). As roles become more blurred, however, Fragola suggests that managers and administrators must focus their efforts on understanding the relationship between librarians and library technicians, and work to mitigate any tension that may occur (Fragola, 2009, p. 25). Librarians and library technicians are and will always be “interconnected” and methods in improving the relationship between the two is vital as roles continue to blur (Fragola, 2009, p. 25).

Also looking into workplace relationships, Hill conducted a survey of two hundred library workers across all sectors in Australian libraries and reported on significant changes occurring to the role of both librarians and library technicians. Most who responded to the survey recognized the distinction of education which prepares library technicians and librarians for different functions (Hill, 2014, p. 28). However, task overlap was a common theme in comments from survey respondents, who felt it was “a reality of the industry” (Hill, 2014, p. 28). Hill is definitive in claiming that tension exists between the librarians and library technicians because, in part, of the blurring of roles. The author develops a list of best practices, one of which states that it is important for workplaces to clearly address role overlap, which will lead to greater productivity and a better team environment (Hill, 2014, p. 23).

A conference paper by Leong and Davidson from the ALIA National Library & Information Technicians Conference comes near to acknowledging that the two roles are closer together than ever before. Technology is reported as a major driver in these changes but the authors also recognize “philosophic, economic, and customer expectations” (Leong & Davidson, 2011, para. 3). They furthermore state that the time may come when there is no distinction between librarians and library technicians and that we are all “pioneers” in this state of adjustment (Leong & Davidson, 2011, para. 4).

Not all of the literature suggests that the blurring of lines between the library technician and the librarian can be looked upon positively. Litwin (2009) suggests there are significant differences between librarians and paraprofessionals (p. 44). The author asserts “professionalism” is defined by intrinsic skill sets and a deeper connection to ethical behavior, presumably because of the focus on the development of these characteristics at the graduate library education level (Litwin, 2009, p. 56). Litwin (2009) contends that paraprofessionals, who appear to be creating an argument for inclusion into the same roles as librarians, are “focused on career advancement and elevated status and little else” (p. 57). While the article focuses on threats to the profession of librarianship, it makes assumptions as to the motivation of paraprofessionals and discusses this alongside the accelerating deprofessionalization movement which may be largely due to changes in institutional philosophy and practices.

Research Methods

Over the course of two weeks, responses were collected using the online survey tool, SurveyMonkey. A request to answer the online survey was sent via the Canadian library listservs, JEROME-L and CLA-L, and shared by the library community via social media channels such as Facebook and alumni groups. Participation was anonymous. Respondents were librarians with an MLIS (or equivalent) qualification, library technicians with a two-year library technology diploma, or students completing either a postgraduate master's degree in library studies or a library technology diploma. Additionally, respondents were required to have been employed as librarians or library technicians within the last two years, or have been students at the time of the survey. Those who had not been working in the field for at least the previous two years were excluded in order to limit findings to current library practices, roles, and responsibilities. Current students were included so that determinations regarding the origin of any possible disconnect could be captured, such as within the education system or upon entering the workforce. Those without specific educational qualifications (a master's degree in library science or a library technician diploma) were excluded from the survey. The research team was interested in investigating how specific educational backgrounds and experiences affected respondents' perceptions and whether these perceptions were formed at the library school (both at the master's level and diploma level) level, or in the workplace.

All respondents were initially asked four demographic questions. Respondents who indicated that they did not meet the qualification and employment criteria outlined above exited the survey at this point. The survey then split, with librarians – including postgraduate students and respondents with both a library technician diploma and a master's degree in library studies – answering one set of questions, and library technicians – including diploma students – answering another. Both question sets were the same, with minor word changes for each part of the survey.

This survey did not track the geographic location of respondents. The scope of this survey also did not specifically include focusing on or highlighting positions within unionized environments.

Results were then extracted from the survey using a SurveyMonkey report and responses were further analyzed based on the library type where respondents were employed. As mentioned in the introduction, due to the rich collection of data gathered, results from the survey will be introduced in two waves. This, the first paper, examines the changing roles and responsibilities of librarians and library technicians; a potential future article will analyze their perceptions of one other.

Results

Demographics

Eight hundred eighty-two respondents indicated that they met the demographic criteria established at the beginning of the survey. Of these, 48.4% indicated they were library technicians and 32.8% indicated they were librarians. Those who identified as students in either a library master's or diploma program made up 12.2% of the overall pool.

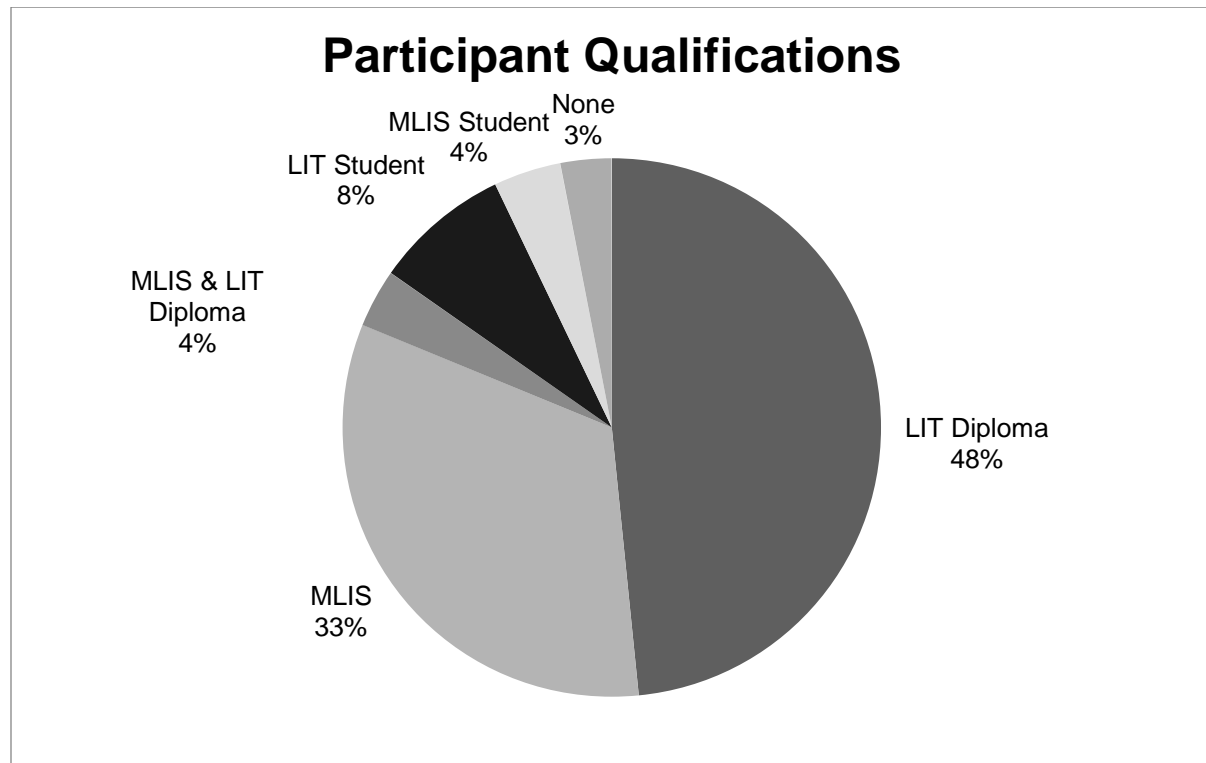


Figure 1. Participant qualifications.

Of the librarian respondents, it is interesting to note that there was a fairly equal distribution of recent graduates, older (prior to 1999) graduates, and students that completed the survey. The largest percentage of respondents (30.5%) indicated they had graduated between 2000 and 2009. Almost half (48.0%) responded they had worked ten or more years as librarians. Of the library technician respondents, the distribution was similar, with 35.3% indicating they graduated between 2000 and 2009. The largest group of the respondents (44.3%) also indicated they had worked ten or more years as library technicians.

Most survey respondents indicated they worked in college, university, public, and school library environments, with a smaller number representing special libraries or other, less traditional library environments. More librarians than library technicians responded from college and university libraries, while only slightly more librarians than technicians were

from public and special libraries. On the contrary, the vast majority of respondents from school libraries identified themselves as library technicians.

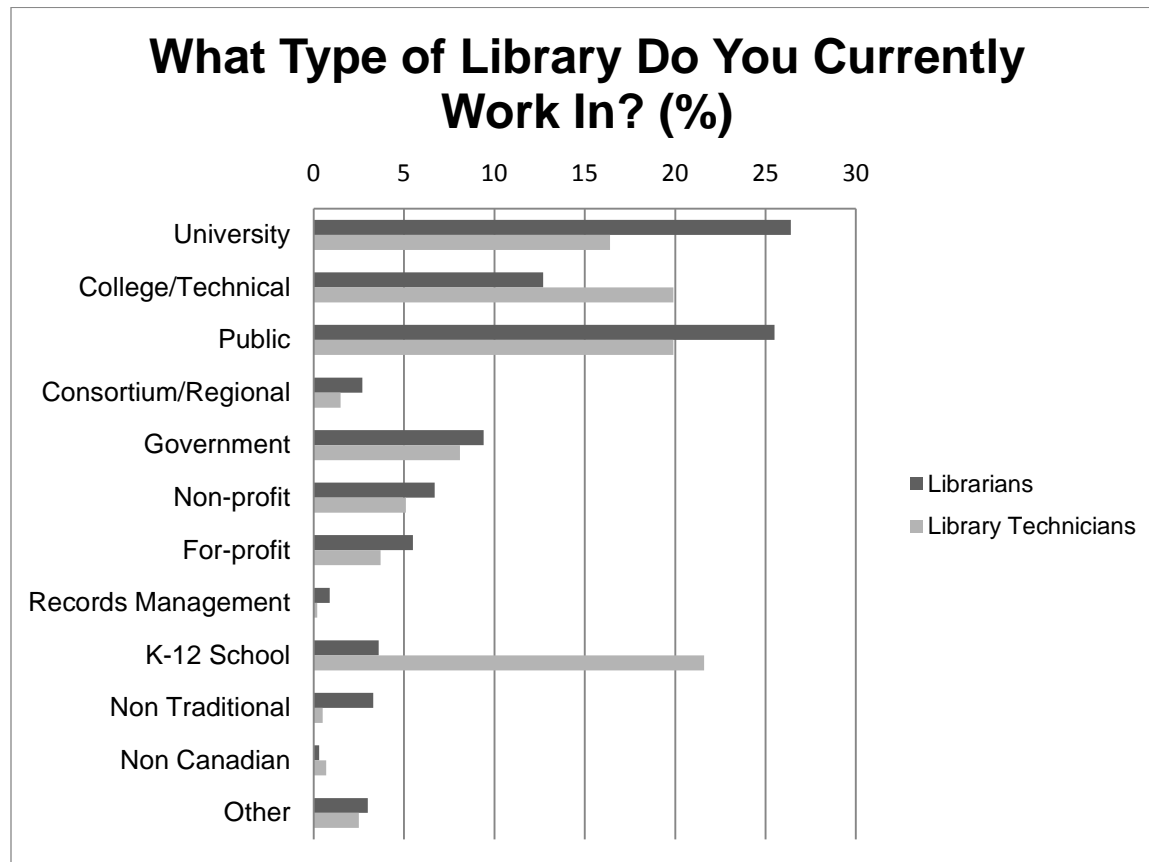


Figure 2. Respondent library type.

Major Work Responsibilities

The categories established in the 8Rs Research Team report (2006) on training gap analysis to define major work responsibilities were used for this survey. Respondents were able to choose more than one option. A majority of library technicians as well as a majority of librarians indicated they were involved with public-facing services and outreach tasks. Information technology responsibilities were also closely shared, with 29.5% of library technicians and 26.5% of librarians responding that they worked with technology. Over half of the librarians identified administration and management as a major work responsibility, compared with less than one third of library technicians. However, 75.2% of library technicians indicated they were responsible for technical and bibliographic service duties, compared with only 28.4% of librarians.

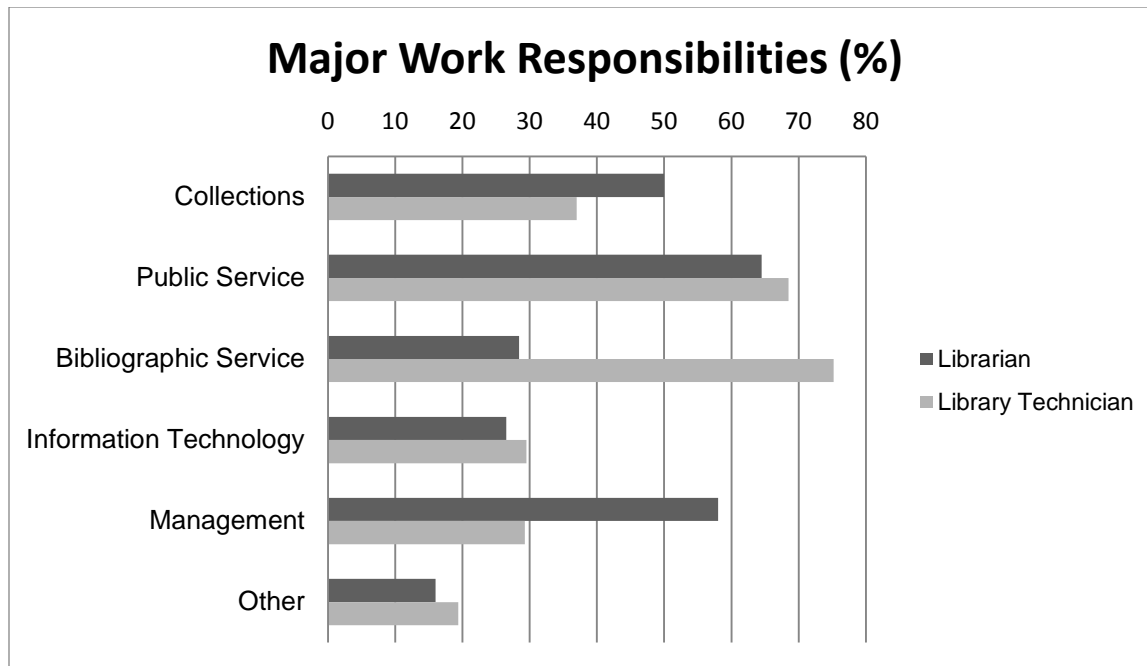


Figure 3. Major work responsibilities.

Understanding of Responsibilities within the Organization

Although results indicate both librarians and library technicians perceive that their roles are changing, the vast majority of both groups felt that all or most of the time they had a clear understanding of their responsibilities within their workplaces as librarians or library technicians (95.7% and 95% respectively).

Role Changes

The question, “Has your role changed over the past 1-5 years?” resulted in an equal percentage (61%) of both librarians and library technicians reporting that their roles and responsibilities had changed in that period of time.

Librarians

Of the 61% of librarians who responded that their role had changed, the majority also provided comments as to how the roles had changed (one hundred seventy-five of one hundred ninety-two responses). The overarching trend of less public interaction in favour of more administrative duties is represented in many comments, particularly those coming from the public library sector:

- “More supervision, less time on reference desk and more time doing one-on-one research consultations, more liaison with faculty. More work, more responsibility.”
- “More facilities planning, more administration work, less hands-on connections with patrons.”

Comments made by public librarians also reflect the impact that changes in the overall role of libraries in society has had on their respective roles:

- “Hours used for marketing and outreach.”
- “Less in-branch programming, more outreach and community building.”
- “Now have to devote more time to fundraising.”
- “My programming/outreach duties have become more of a priority.”

Academic librarians also indicated they are adopting greater administrative duties, with some taking on such duties in addition to the traditional duties of reference and instruction, while others indicate this role is replacing typical library responsibilities:

- “I was a research and instructional librarian. Now I am more of an administrator.”
- “No longer work on the reference desk...present at more conferences, coordinate more projects.”
- “More strategic planning, data collection and analysis.”
- “More committee work.”
- “Less supervision, more instruction, more scholarly work (research, presenting, publishing).”

The shift in traditional librarian duties is also a common theme. In special libraries, work is perceived to be less library-related and more organizational in focus:

- “More of a focus on outreach work, e.g. liaison activities with various departments and professions.”
- “Role evolves as function changes within the organization I work for. Now more of a management role.”

Budget cutbacks and retirements are often perceived to be reasons for role changes:

- “Extra administrative and records roles, could not justify having a full-time librarian on staff, therefore had to cut down on library hours to tack on extra, different duties.”
- “Took on additional roles as positions were cut.”
- “Taken over the responsibilities of a retired employee.”

Comments from those working in the public library sector reflect how traditional librarian roles are shifting to library technicians, with a few suggesting that this is concerning:

- “Traditional management and technical services roles are seen as being no longer the purview of professional librarians and this work has been shifted to paraprofessionals.”
- “Library downplaying the role of librarians and preferring to hire non-professional or paraprofessional staff.”
- “Yes, all library positions have experienced a blurring of responsibilities. In short, there has been a very troubling deprofessionalization for librarians.”

Comments from all library environments demonstrate the impact of technology and the need for the development of new skills to manage these resources:

- “The digital environment has changed a great deal of our work processes and we need new competencies to be effective in the work place.”
- “More training, more technology, more tasks.”
- “The explosion of e-books and mobile devices has meant big changes.”

Overall, most librarians perceived an increase in workload and not simply an adjustment of workload. They indicated that this increase is in the form of additional administrative or managerial tasks, along with research and technological duties. Another common trend identified through librarian comments is a decrease in the amount of time spent at the reference desk in favour of other duties within the library. The tone is one of acceptance of the altering library universe: one survey respondent calls it the “transformational library”.

Library Technicians

Similar to librarians, library technicians who indicated changes to their roles (60.7% commented heavily on what those changes were (two hundred thirty-two of two hundred forty-one responses). Much like the comments from librarians, library technicians also articulate the trend towards taking over roles traditionally the domain of librarians:

- “Increasing levels of responsibility, less clerical work in favour of more technical and data curation work, more pivotal role in the organization.”
- “Our role has changed drastically. As the librarian’s roles change to become more research oriented, the technicians have been picking up way more responsibility for the day to day running and managing of the library.”
- “Technicians seen as jack-of-all-trades, expected to be able to do things outside of regular scope, doing librarian work.”

Technology is perceived to be a major factor in the evolution of the library technician roles, identified by comments from all library sectors. Library technicians in special libraries in particular identified an increased technological workload, with the most general comment being a re-allocation of duties due to structural changes within the library or collection composition:

- “We are constantly adding new roles to our existing roles...due to electronic information.”
- “Added roles due to technology, databases, e-sources, etc.”

While technology was viewed to have played a role in job changes for nearly one third of university respondents, just as prominent were comments of higher level work being assumed by library technicians, specifically with regards to special projects, reference work, and systems responsibilities:

- “More copyright knowledge, more technological work, more licensing.”
- “More projects involving data analysis.”
- “Added chat to reference work, more collaboration with other departments on campus (such as student outreach).”

The public library also appears to be a venue for increased technological workloads, with other respondents citing increased supervisory duties, programming, or customer service. In general, library technicians perceive themselves as becoming the predominant front line staff for public service and technological assistance. Some respondents suggested training is lacking for the library technicians assuming these duties:

- “Added customer service, more specific programming without training.”

A significant number of library technicians in schools claimed an added IT component to their workload, with another significant but smaller portion claiming their workload was being increased with non-library duties such as administrative work and supervisory duties. A small percentage of library technicians reported having to assume the duties of the Teacher-Librarian following the latter’s dismissal or retirement.

Some comments indicate dissatisfaction with new tasks without training, or a downgrading of tasks:

- “Our duties are now more reflective of a page than a public service assistant.”
- “We are doing much more clerical work than in the past. At one time there was more challenging and intellectual work. That has changed into more routine work.”
- “Responsibilities have been taken away, position has become a lot more clerical and less fulfilling.”

A decrease in staffing appears in comments related to an increase in workloads:

- “Less staff...no extra pay...no extra time to complete tasks...more responsibility and less pay...loss of staff, no replacement due to budget...workload increase due to job cuts.”

Overall, the majority of respondents who reported a role change indicated the increased or changed workload was due to the now-essential technologies that have become a part of everyday duties in the past decade. From database work to e-resource management, to the ensuing required copyright knowledge, the library technician workload appears to have increased for these respondents. Other trends include a perceived increased workload due to staff layoffs, librarians not being replaced upon retirement, an increase in community outreach or other departmental involvement, and library technicians being asked to do more complex and diverse tasks once the domain of the librarians.

Discussion

The results show that work responsibilities are often perceived to be overlapping between the librarian and the library technician. Both groups appear to be performing more tasks that are new to their domain and are spending less time on traditional functions. For example, librarians indicate that they are spending more time with strategic planning and project management and less face time with patrons, while library technicians report that they are providing significantly more public-facing services and doing less behind-the-scenes work such as in technical service areas.

There is evidence of major perceived increases in supervision, technology-related jobs, patron programming, and instruction for library technicians. The response of “supervision” was undefined by respondents and may refer to supervising students in a school as opposed to supervising other staff. The most significant trend, as indicated by comments received from respondents, was the library technician role appearing to expand as a result of industry and technological changes. Rote tasks such as circulation duties are reported as now being automated, leaving library technicians to assume front-line public service duties such as programming, reference work, and most predominantly working with e-resources and devices.

Zhu (2012) suggests that the role of the librarian and library technicians has been in flux for almost as long as these roles have existed (p. 128). Confusion of roles, a blurring of the line between librarians and library technicians, and fluidity of tasks are nothing new to the library field. What may be a new phenomenon is the perception that the role of the paraprofessional is increasing in scope and intellectual caliber. It is also suggested by the respondents that remuneration has not increased along with the aforementioned heightened responsibilities.

Perhaps these conclusions are not surprising; however, it is confirmation that roles within libraries in Canada are perceived to be constantly evolving and it is an indication of how, specifically, the roles are perceived to be changing. As much as is possible, library school curricula at the master's and diploma level as well as workplace training should reflect role and competency changes so as to best prepare both librarians and library technicians for the transitioning nature of the workplace.

Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations to using this survey as the only method of data collection. The researchers acknowledge that some organizations have information technology protocols that may prevent employees from accessing SurveyMonkey, which may have limited the number of potential respondents. This survey only recorded perceptions of librarians and library technicians from their own lived experiences, not from the context of workplace roles and responsibilities as outlined by organizational structures or as implemented by administration or human resources departments.

A question on the survey was: “What is your current professional role or current program of study?” 10.6% of respondents selected “Other”, yet the majority of those 10.6% potentially fell into one of the other categories, but misidentified themselves. A select number were “out of scope” (e.g. Directors, Researchers, etc.) and others held a new position outside the library field. A better question would have been, “What is your current, or most recent professional role or current or most recent program of study?” Those respondents whose positions were out of scope, yet had responded that they had worked in a library setting in the last two years, would have had a clear category to select.

Due to the fact that the survey was not distributed to a controlled survey pool, there is no accurate way to determine the ratio of respondents to the overall potential number of librarians and library technicians currently working in Canada at this time. It cannot be assumed that all responses came from Canadian sources as the survey was not restricted to Canada. Also, the survey did not delineate geographical location of the respondent; therefore, trends in specific parts of Canada could not be ascertained. Further research could explore if perceptions differ in various parts of Canada, or even amongst other countries.

Students were included as acceptable respondents, but due to the small number of responses, conclusions cannot be drawn about the effect of educational programs at either the master's or diploma level, on workplace role perceptions.

Conclusion

In this survey, the librarians and library technicians who responded articulated how they perceived their roles and responsibilities to be changing. It is clear both librarian and library technician roles and responsibilities are perceived to be growing in scope and complexity.

What do these findings mean for our future? It can be assured that both librarians and library technicians will continue to perceive that significant changes to traditional roles are ongoing. Further investigation into role changes and relationships would provide clearer and more definitive directions for workplaces and library education programs. Themes may be uncovered in the future if attention is given to more complex research methods that include a qualitative investigation, such as an ethnographic study. The lived experiences of librarians and library technicians may provide valuable insight as to how they perceive their roles. This is especially relevant when examining roles in specific kinds of libraries. Furthermore, consultations with administration and human resources departments would help to provide specific evidence of role changes.

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Appendix A

Changing Roles and Perceptions of Librarians and Library Technicians

Attention all librarians, library technicians and library students!

You are being invited to participate in a research study about the changing roles of and relationships between Librarians and Library Technicians.

The purpose of this research is to identify the way roles might be changing in the two professions, what the reasons are for possible change, and what methods can be used to improve awareness between the professions.

The results of this research will be of interest to many, both experienced and new to the professions. Ultimately, the purpose in doing the study is to continue facilitating strong working relationships between the two professions. This study will provide a greater understanding and heightened awareness of each other's roles and issues with the workplace environment.

This study consists of an online survey that will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study. There are no costs to you for participating in the study. Valid participants will be librarians with an MLIS qualification, or library technicians with a 2 yr library technology diploma, or students of either a post graduate masters degree in library studies or a library technology diploma.

This survey is anonymous. Do not identify yourself in the survey. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study. Should the data be published or presented, no individual information will be disclosed.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw from the survey at any time. Should you wish to withdraw before submitting your survey, the data will not be stored. By completing and submitting the questionnaire, your free and informed consent is implied and shows that you understand the conditions of participation in this study. Please see the attached Participant Consent Form for more information.

This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the MacEwan University Research Ethics Board on February 10, 2014.

This survey will close on March 5, 2014.

Thank you for your participation!
Norene James, Katherine Koch and Lisa Shamchuk

*What qualifications do you currently have?

- Library Technician Diploma
- MLIS
- Both a Library Technician Diploma and MLIS
- Student of a Library Technician program
- Student of an MLIS program
- None

Changing Roles and Perceptions of Librarians and Library Technicians

***Have you been employed in the last 2 years in a library or information setting, or are you currently employed in a library or information setting?**

- Yes
- Yes, but I am also currently a student in a Library Technician or MLIS program
- No, but I am currently a student in a Library Technician or MLIS program
- No

***What is your current professional role or current program of study?**

- Librarian (Note: Librarian also encompasses senior managers with a MLIS.)
- Library Technician (Note: Library Technician also encompasses the following job titles: Library Assistant, Public Service Assistant, Reference Assistant, Records Technician or other positions that require the 2 year Library Technician diploma qualification.)
- Other (please specify)

***What year did you graduate from your MLIS/MLS program?**

- Prior to 1990
- 1990-1999
- 2000-2009
- 2010-2013
- Have not yet graduated

***How long have you worked as a librarian?**

- <1
- 1-2 yrs
- 2-5 yrs
- 5-10 yrs
- >10 yrs

***Have you ever worked as a library technician?**

- Yes
- No

Changing Roles and Perceptions of Librarians and Library Technicians

*How long did you work as a library technician?

- <1
- 1-2 yrs
- 2-5 yrs
- 5-10 yrs
- >10 yrs

*Which of the following library sectors/locations best describes the type of library you are currently working in or have most recently worked in?

- University library
- College/technical institute library (including university colleges)
- Public library
- Consortium or regional library
- Special library: government
- Special library: Non-profit library (eg. hospital, religious institution, charity organization)
- Special library: For-profit library (eg. business, law firm, bank)
- Records Management sector (any industry including for-profit or government)
- School library (K-12)
- Non-traditional library workplace (eg. Archives, library consulting firm, vendor, research projects)
- Non-Canadian library
- Other (please specify)

*Have you worked in other libraries as a Librarian?

- Yes
- No

*If you have worked in other libraries, how many different libraries? (eg. 2)

Changing Roles and Perceptions of Librarians and Library Technicians

*Type of library (check all that apply)

- University library
- College/technical institute library (including university colleges)
- Public library
- Consortium or regional library
- Special library: government
- Special library: Non-profit library (eg. hospital, religious institution, charity organization)
- Special library: For-profit library (eg. business, law firm, bank)
- Records Management sector (any industry including for-profit or government)
- School library (K-12)
- Non-traditional library workplace (eg. Archives, library consulting firm, vendor, research projects)
- Non-Canadian library
- Other (please specify)

*What are your major work responsibilities? (check all that apply)

- Collections (e.g. collection development, copyright clearance, electronic licensing)
- Public Service and Outreach (e.g. reference, instruction, programming, reader's advisory, liaison activities with community or faculty)
- Technical and Bibliographic Service (e.g. cataloguing, database management, interlibrary loans, acquisition, circulation, shelving, bindery, repair)
- Information Technology (e.g. library systems support, network management, web development)
- Administration and Management (e.g. training, supervision, organizational planning, budgeting, facility management, fund-raising, marketing)
- Other important job functions (please list)

*Do you have a clear understanding of your responsibilities as a Librarian in your organization?

- All of the time
- Most of the time
- Often Not
- Never

Changing Roles and Perceptions of Librarians and Library Technicians

***Is your job description an accurate reflection of your current responsibilities?**

- Yes
- No

If No, why not?

***Has your role changed over the past 1-5 years? (e.g. more supervision, less hands-on work with patrons, more programming)**

- Yes
- No

If yes, please specify how it has changed.

***How often do you work with Library Technicians? (A Library Technician is defined as someone with a 2-year diploma in Library and Information Technology.)**

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Rarely or Not at all

Changing Roles and Perceptions of Librarians and Library Technicians

***The following questions are asking your opinion regarding Library Technicians (including Library Assistants, Public Service Assistants, Reference Assistants, Records Technicians, or other positions that require the 2-year Library Technician diploma qualification).**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Library Technicians are important to the effective functioning of a library or information setting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Library Technicians' concerns or problems should be given the same consideration as those of librarians and/or senior management.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of the Library Technicians I know seem competent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most Library Technicians I know strive to improve the workplace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Library Technicians work as hard as Librarians.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Some of the Library Technicians I know could do my job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I respect Library Technicians and the work they do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In today's libraries, Library Technicians are doing tasks that Librarians used to do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a conflict between the Librarian and Library Technician professions in terms of working together effectively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Library/Library Technician schools emphasize the differences between the two professions, creating a divide before even entering the profession.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An in-group bias towards one's own profession is natural and cannot be avoided. (an in-group bias is defined as "a sociological	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Changing Roles and Perceptions of Librarians and Library Technicians

phenomenon in which members of a group display a preference for others in that group, valuing them above members of other groups).

Conflict may arise between the professions because roles are changing so radically, no one is clear what their job is anymore.

Conflict may arise between the professions because of a lack of knowledge of what the other profession does.

Conflict may arise between the professions because the workplace creates an environment of separation.

Conflict between the professions existed more in the past than it does now.

What other reasons can you think of that might cause conflict between the professions?

Changing Roles and Perceptions of Librarians and Library Technicians

*What efforts would help Librarians and Library Technicians better understand each other's roles?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
More focus in library/library technician schools on understanding each other's roles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More interaction between MLIS students and Library Technician students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workplace seminars and workshops arranged by library management to discuss roles, expectations, and in-group bias.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All-staff outings and social get-togethers arranged by library management.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More focus from library associations on understanding each other's roles (workshops, conference sessions, social activities, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Library workplaces need to be more clear on what everyone's role is.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other ideas (please specify)

*What year did you graduate from your Library Technician program?

- Prior to 1990
- 1990-1999
- 2000-2009
- 2010-2013
- Have not yet graduated

Changing Roles and Perceptions of Librarians and Library Technicians

*How long have you worked as a library technician?

- <1
- 1-2 yrs
- 2-5 yrs
- 5-10 yrs
- >10 yrs

*Have you ever worked as a librarian?

- Yes
- No

*How long did you work as a librarian?

- <1
- 1-2 yrs
- 2-5 yrs
- 5-10 yrs
- 10 yrs

*Which of the following library sectors/locations best describes the type of library you are currently working in or have most recently worked in?

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- Non-traditional library workplace (eg. Archives, library consulting firm, vendor, research projects)
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- Other (please specify)

Changing Roles and Perceptions of Librarians and Library Technicians

*Have you worked in other libraries as a Library Technician?

- Yes
 No

*If you have worked in other libraries, how many different libraries? (eg. 2)

*Type of library (check all that apply)

- University library
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- Administration and Management (e.g. training, supervision, organizational planning, budgeting, facility management, fund-raising, marketing)
- Other important job functions(please specify)

Changing Roles and Perceptions of Librarians and Library Technicians

***Do you have a clear understanding of your responsibilities as a Library Technician in your organization?**

- All of the time
- Most of the time
- Often Not
- Never

***Is your job description an accurate reflection of your current responsibilities?**

- Yes
- No

If No, why not?

***Has your role changed over the past 1-5 years? (e.g. more supervision, less hands-on work with patrons, more programming)**

- Yes
- No

If yes, please specify how it has changed.

***How often do you work with Librarians? (A Librarian is defined as someone with a Masters of Library and Information Studies.)**

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Rarely or Not at all

Changing Roles and Perceptions of Librarians and Library Technicians

***The following questions are asking your opinion regarding Librarians (a Librarian is defined as someone with a Masters of Library and Information Studies).**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Librarians are important to the effective functioning of a library or information setting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Librarians' concerns or problems should be given the same considerations as those of Library Technicians.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of the Librarians I know seem competent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most Librarians I know strive to improve the workplace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Librarians work as hard as Library Technicians.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Some of the Librarians I know could do my job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I respect Librarians and the work they do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In today's libraries, Library Technicians are doing tasks that Librarians used to do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a conflict between the Librarian and Library Technician professions in terms of working together effectively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Library/Library Technician schools emphasize the differences between the two professions, creating a divide before even entering the profession.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An in-group bias towards one's own profession is natural and cannot be avoided. (an in-group bias is defined as "a sociological phenomenon in which members of a group display a preference for others in that group, valuing them above members of other groups).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conflict may arise between the professions because	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Changing Roles and Perceptions of Librarians and Library Technicians

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Changing Roles and Perceptions of Librarians and Library Technicians

*What efforts would help Librarians and Library Technicians better understand each other's roles?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
More focus in library/library technician schools on understanding each other's roles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More interaction between MLIS students and Library Technician students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workplace seminars and workshops arranged by library management to discuss roles, expectations, and in-group bias.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All-staff outings and social get-togethers arranged by library management.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More focus from library associations on understanding each other's roles (workshops, conference sessions, social activities, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Library workplaces need to be more clear on what everyone's role is.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other ideas (please specify)

Thank you for completing this survey.