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Recruitment and retention of rural public library directors in Idaho: Research results.

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Recruitment and Retention of Rural Public Library Directors in Idaho: Research Results

by Thomas Ivie

Introduction

“There is an assumption that the public library is predominantly an urban institution, and ... that depends on how the word 'urban' is defined...” (Sager, p. 5). Furthermore, it can depend on how the word “rural” is defined. Approximately eighty-two percent of public libraries in the U.S. serve populations of under 25,000 (Vavrek, May 1983, p. 966), perhaps the most common definition of a rural area. Idaho public libraries fall in line with the national statistic by being approximately eighty percent rural (E.D. TAB: Public Libraries in the United States: Fiscal Year 1999). Whether or not one agrees with the projection that “…most public libraries, even the smallest, will be led by professional managers” (Kirwin, p. 7), the library and information science profession needs to increase its knowledge about those among its ranks who manage the majority of the nation’s public libraries.

Problem and Purpose

A major barrier to the tracking of trends in the management of rural library and information services is the paucity of data. Both quantitative and qualitative data, in this regard, would enable the unmasking or refining of generalizations applied to rural communities of varying sizes and locations. The revival of interest in rural librarianship in the past has brought greater attention to the problems of rural library and information services and has, to a certain degree, enhanced the gathering of data. Examples include the establishment of the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship in Clarion, Pennsylvania, in 1978; initiation of a Rural Library Services Committee as part of the Public Library Development at the School of Library and Information Science at the University of Missouri-Columbia; publication of the Rural Library Services newsletter and the periodical Rural Libraries; conferences convened in various regions specifically to address rural library issues; job descriptions in professional journals asking for knowledge or experience in rural library development; and professional library programs offering an emphasis for rural librarians.

In spite of these developments there is still a great need for research on rural libraries in order to understand their operational environments and to devise strategies capable of handling the library and information service needs of rural citizens in the information age. Although a certain amount of anecdotal literature exists on the rural library experience, as well as a host of statistical and other types of reports done by system, state, regional and national library agencies, “the body of knowledge which constitutes the present state of rural librarianship...is almost totally empirical in nature with little or no theoretical connectors. In other words, knowledge of rural librarianship is comprised of pockets or islands of information, for the most part in the hands of practitioners in the field” (Norris, p. 23).

With such a void in the existing knowledge base concerning rural library and information service, researchers are faced with the task of selecting the components that could shed light on the theoretical implications. One such component of the
A rural library service conundrum that can be viewed as critical and a top priority in this research agenda is the recruitment and retention of personnel directing rural libraries. As Alice Bryan pointed out years ago in The Public Librarian: “The public library is no exception to the general rule that an institution is as good as its personnel” (Bryan, p. 3).

Virtually no research has been done, however, relating to the recruitment and retention of librarians in rural areas of the U.S. One of the major problems facing rural public libraries is the recruitment and retention of directors. In Moscow, Idaho, the Latah County Library District suspended a third consecutive failed search for a Library Director on January 1, 2002. The reason for the failed searches was a low salary. The Latah County Library District had no problems in recruiting for non-administrative librarians during the same time period (Moscow-Pullman Daily News, Jan. 7, 2002). In the 2001 American Library Association (ALA) Recruitment and Retirement Survey, the survey identified that finding experienced staff for middle and top management positions is a problem for libraries (American Library Association, 2001). A 2003 Recruitment and Retention Survey of Association for Research Libraries (ARL) Librarians concluded that salary range was considered an enhancement and a barrier by an equal number of respondents (20 or 29%). In addition, the survey concluded that position responsibilities and salary have a high impact (46%), followed closely by benefits (42%), on the retention of librarians (Stevens & Streatfeild, p.12). Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to evaluate whether Idaho public libraries have difficulty in recruiting and retaining directors and, if so, whether salary and community size are factors.

Because the concept of “rural” is a key element in the overall framework of any rural research, the various meanings and applications of the term need to be explored. Rural is an inexact term that can mean different things to different people. Attempts at defining rural range from demographic to psychological. Unfortunately, there is no one correct definition. More discussion on defining rural for rural library research may be found in v. 59, no. 1 of the Idaho Librarian, Defining “Rural” for Rural Library Research. For the purposes of this research, rural is defined as a community of 25,000 or less, located outside of a Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Research Methodology

As the researcher wished to investigate salary and community size as factors in the recruitment and retention of Idaho’s public library directors, the survey was seen as the most appropriate method for gathering this type of information. The researcher also used data gleaned from other sources on the salaries of public library directors and the size of communities they work in. These sources included the 2001-2005 ALA Survey of Librarian Salaries, FY 06 Idaho Public Library Statistics, and the 2005 Municipal Yearbook. While current editions of these sources do exist, the author chose sources that would closely match the 2004 date of his Idaho survey for accurate comparison purposes. The 2005 edition of the Municipal Yearbook was chosen because the 2006 and 2007 editions did not contain complete data for all of the categories the author wished to compare.

Selection and Description of Population

As this survey’s objectives related to factors affecting the recruitment and retention of all library directors in Idaho, the population selected for the purpose of this study was the directors of all Idaho public libraries and the trustees of those libraries during the time in which the survey was conducted (May 2nd through May 21st of 2004). The library directors were chosen as an observational unit because only they could provide certain personal information. Trustees were chosen as an additional observational unit because they are the group that hires the directors and is concerned with retaining them.

Prior to this study, the population of Idaho public library directors had not been surveyed on issues relating to recruitment and retention, such as salary and community size. A statewide survey was, therefore, decided upon in order to investigate the similarities between and the differences among Idaho public library directors, as well as to assist in establishing a base of statewide data on this population in Idaho.
In the end, there were eighty-five (85) total responses to the survey. Of the responses, fifty-three (53) were from directors and thirty-two (32) were trustees. The fifty-three (53) directors represented forty-nine percent (49%) of the potential population surveyed. The thirty-two (32) trustees represented only a little over six percent (6.27%) of the potential population of trustees surveyed.

**Non-Survey Data**

The average public library director salaries were compared for the West/Southwest region of the U.S. and then compared to the national average. As seen in the graph below, the salary in the West/Southwest region has equaled or been more than the national average for the five years 2001-2005 (ALA Survey of Librarian Salaries, 2001-2005).

![Average Director Salaries by Region](http://www.idaholibraries.org/idlibrarian/index.php/idaho-librarian/article/view/28/100)

This statistic does not take into account the rurality or size of community. However, it does show somewhat of a correlation between the national average and the region. Although, the West/SW Directors seem to earn slightly more than the average for all regions, one of the problems with this statistic is that it represents a large territory. It would be interesting to see if the correlation is the same if this region were broken into to separate urban and rural regions.

The 2006 Idaho library director salaries were compared in order to take into account the size of community and to break down the region into ‘Idaho.’ This revealed an obvious correlation between population size and salary (Idaho Public Library Statistics, 2006).

![2006 Idaho Library Director Salaries](http://www.idaholibraries.org/idlibrarian/index.php/idaho-librarian/article/view/28/100)
Salaries of library directors were compared to those of other public officials by community size for the year 2004 using the 2005 Municipal Yearbook. This was the last year of data available that included Chief Librarian salaries (2006 and 2007 editions did not have completed data for all categories). This comparison was done to see if there were similar correlations between the salary and community size among other public officials. The following charts show the outcomes.

**Figure 2**

![Chief Librarian Salaries by Population](http://www.idaholibraries.org/idlibrarian/index.php/idaho-librarian/article/view/28/100)

**Figure 3**

![Planning Director Salaries by Population](http://www.idaholibraries.org/idlibrarian/index.php/idaho-librarian/article/view/28/100)

**Figure 4**
It can be noted that the declining curves are similar between the salaries of the different public officials. One observation that was made is that for the chief librarian there is a steeper drop in the curve between the 10,000-24,999 range and the 5,000-9,999 range than for the other officials.

Survey Data: Descriptive Data on Idaho Public Library Directors

Personal Characteristics

This section presents descriptive data and discussion on the following director characteristics; age, gender, marital status, ethnic background and education.

Age

The data revealed that 1.9 percent of the Idaho directors were age thirty-one to thirty-five, nearly 3.9 percent were between ages thirty-six to forty, nearly one-fourth were ages forty-one to fifty (23.1 percent), over half were ages fifty-one to sixty (55.8 percent), 11.5 percent were ages sixty-one to sixty-five, and 1.9 percent were older than sixty-five. There were no directors that fell between the ages of eighteen and thirty. The average age of the directors is between fifty-one and sixty.

Gender
The overwhelming majority of the Idaho directors were female (84.6 percent), while only 15.4 percent were male.

Marital Status

Well over three-fourths of Idaho directors were married (86.53 percent), less than four percent single (3.85 percent), and, again, less than four percent were widowed (3.85 percent), while nearly six percent were divorced (5.77 percent).

Ethnic Background

The data revealed that Idaho directors were predominantly white (96.08 percent), minorities being very much underrepresented. Less than two percent of directors were American Indian (1.9 percent), and less than two percent were Asian/Pacific Islander (1.9 percent). The categories of Hispanic and African American were not represented by the respondents.

Education

The next to largest group had a Master degree in library/information science (26.92 percent) while 3.85 percent held a Master degree in another discipline. The largest group reported that they had some college (34.62 percent). While more than seven percent had a college degree with a library concentration (7.69 percent), more than nineteen percent had a Bachelors degree (19.23 percent), and the remaining included those with a High school diploma/GED (3.85 percent). The "other" category included having a teaching certificate and a Juris Doctorate (1.92 percent).

This questionnaire did not pose the question of whether the director position required any specific level of education or experience so the number of posts that actually specified or would have liked the director to have the Master of Library Science degree or some other level of education is unknown.

Community-Related Characteristics

The following section presents descriptive data and discussion on the following community-related characteristics; size of work communities, size of communities in which Idaho’s public library directors live, size of communities in which they would most and least like to live, number of years the directors have lived in their communities, and their reasons for moving to the areas in which they live.

Size of Work Communities

The research in this area was divided into two groups: (1) Directors who live in the same community they work in, and (2) Directors who live in a different community than where they work. Of the group of Idaho public library directors who live in the same community as they work, about 79 percent of them work in communities that have a population smaller than 25,000. More than one-third (34.88 percent) of the respondents work in communities smaller than 2,500, while 13.95 percent work in communities with populations between 2,500 and 4,999, and 20.93 percent between 5,000 and 9,999. The size of work communities in which the directors reported working and living range from a population of less than 2,500 to more than 50,000, the mean average population being 14,708 with a standard deviation of 16,505.

Of the Idaho public library directors who live in a different community than they work, 75 percent of them work in communities that have a population smaller than 25,000. One quarter (25 percent) of the respondents work in communities smaller than 2,500, while 12.5 percent work in communities with populations between 5,000 and 9,999, and 18.75 percent between 10,000 and 14,999. The size of work communities in which the directors reported working but not living in range from a population of less than 2,500 to more than 50,000, the mean average population being 18,436 with a standard deviation of 15,832.

Size of Communities of Residence

Figures for the size of communities in which Idaho public library directors live were a little different than those in which they
work. The majority of directors (78.57 percent) live in communities where the population is less than 25,000. Well over one-third (37.5 percent) live in communities that are smaller than 2,500. Almost forty percent of the directors live in communities with a population of less than 2,500 (37.5 percent), 2,500 – 4,999 (12.5 percent), 5,000-9,000 (17.85 percent), and 10,000-14,999 (7.14 percent). The mean average size of community in which an Idaho public library director resides is 15,044 with a standard deviation of 17,142.

Size of Communities in Which the Director Would Most and Least Like To Live

When Idaho's public library directors were asked to suppose that they could live in any size community they wanted, almost two-thirds (64 percent) indicated that they would most like to live in communities of less than 25,000 in population. A surprising twenty-four percent prefer to live in a community with less than 2,500. In contrast, just over one-fifth (22 percent) responded that they would most like to live in communities with a population from 50,000 to more than 500,000.

When speculating upon the size of communities in which they would least like to live, Idaho public library directors' preferences were, on the whole, more sharply defined. The vast majority (75.47 percent) indicated that they would least like to live in communities of 500,000 or more. In contrast, only 13.20 percent said that they would not choose to live in communities with fewer than 2,500 in population.

Number of Years in Communities of Residence

When asked how long the directors had been living in their present communities, replies ranged from less than 1 year to more than 20 years. Over half (50.94 percent) of the respondents said they had lived in their community for more than 20 years. Another 11 percent said they had lived in their community between 13 and 20 years. The remaining 37.73 percent lived in their communities 10 years or less. Of those, 15.09 percent had lived there one year or less.

Directors' Reasons for Moving to Area

Idaho public library directors revealed a variety of reasons for moving to the area in which they lived and worked. The respondents were told to select all the answers that applied with the option of specifying an "other." The most common answer was that they had moved to the community for their spouse's job. The next group of answers received a comparable number of responses: they were born there; they moved there for the job; and they moved there because they wanted to live in a smaller community. A few responded that they wanted to live near relatives or wanted a slower pace of living. In addition, there were several "other" answers. Those respondents cited reasons including: smaller schools; progressive community; purchased family farm; liking the area; wanting a rural lifestyle; moved here to retire; scenic beauty; and moved for another job.

Community-Related Influences in Accepting the Position and Staying in It

The directors were asked to choose all the community-related influences that applied to their accepting the director position as well as what influenced their staying in the position. Of the 51 directors that responded to the question of which items influenced their reason for accepting the position of director, the majority responded that the duties of the position (56.86 percent) and the opportunity to make changes in the library (60.78 percent) influenced them to accept the position of director. About one-fifth of the respondents gave as their reasons as feeling safe in the community (19.61 percent), the geographic location of the community (23.55 percent), friendships in the community (23.53 percent), the size of the community (21.57 percent), salary (33.33 percent), and health insurance (25.49 percent). Other responses included the availability of housing (7.84 percent), the weather/climate of the area (13.73 percent), employment opportunities for their spouse (11.76 percent), educational opportunities for their children (1.96 percent), availability of medical services (7.84 percent), recreational opportunities (9.80 percent), family ties they have in the community (15.69 percent), opportunity for career advancement (17.65 percent), and other benefits (15.69 percent). Other miscellaneous responses included: choices of church, being able to walk to work, good staff, hours and flexibility, and it was a job.

The outcome of the replies was quite different when asked which community-related items influenced them in staying in
their position as director. Over half of the respondents listed as their reasons for staying as the geographic location (55.10 percent), friendships they have in the community (55.10 percent), how safe they feel in the community (55.10 percent), and the size of the community (55.10 percent). About forty percent of the respondents gave as reasons for staying as the weather/climate of the area (40.82 percent), employment opportunities for their spouse (46.94 percent), recreational opportunities (34.69 percent), and family ties in the community (38.78 percent). Additional responses included educational opportunities for their children (6.12 percent), participation in community organizations (26.53 percent), the availability of medical services (20.41 percent), and the availability of housing (18.37 percent). It appears that these items had greater influence when applied to the director staying in the position than when accepting the position.

**Professional Characteristics**

The following professional characteristics of Idaho public library directors are described and discussed in this section, including length of time in current positions, prior experience in the same libraries, type of employment agreement, how much they are paid, the kind of paid benefits they receive, and performance evaluations.

*Length of Time in Current Positions*

When the directors were asked how long they had been in their current positions, responses ranged from less than one year to more than twenty years. The researcher found that over sixty percent (63.81 percent) of the respondents had worked at their current position ten years or less. Forty percent (40.41 percent) had been in their current position as director five years or less. One quarter (25.54 percent) of the directors had worked in their current position from fifteen years to more than twenty years.

*Prior Experience in Same Libraries*

Directors were also asked if they had worked in the same libraries prior to becoming directors, and if so, for how long. Of the 51 directors responding to that question, 26 or just over 50 percent had worked in the same libraries before becoming directors. In terms of the length of time directors worked prior to taking over the head positions, this ranged from less than one year to more than ten years. Less than one-third (30.77 percent) worked in the same library more than ten years before finally becoming the Director. In contrast, 38.47 percent worked in the same library five years or less before becoming the Director.

*Type of Employment*

Idaho’s public library directors were asked to indicate whether they were employed full-time or part-time. A flaw in the original design of this question was the absence of a category for volunteer status, which was added to the question of “how much are you paid per hour.” Slightly over sixty percent (62.75 percent) were employed full-time and 37.25 percent were employed part-time. Part-time was defined as less than 35 hours per week. There were no responses to volunteer status on the question of how much they are paid per hour, indicating that none of the directors who responded work on a volunteer basis.

*Amount of Wages Received*

The data on the ranges of wages received by the directors shows that over thirty percent (31.25 percent) of the directors earn more than $20 per hour. Almost half (47.91 percent) of the directors earn between $10.01 and $20 per hour, while about one-fifth (20.84 percent) earns between $10 and minimum wage. The researcher made sure that one of the choices was “volunteer (no pay)” but did not receive any responses, reinforcing the results indicating that all of the respondents were paid for their services.

*Paid Benefits Received*

The directors were asked to choose which benefits, from a list of those assumed to be the most commonly received, were
paid for by their libraries. Of the 54 directors who responded to the survey 50 of them answered the question on which benefits their library pays for. More than half of the directors received paid health insurance (60 percent), retirement (70 percent), sick leave (78 percent), and vacation (84 percent). Less than half received life insurance (36 percent).

In terms of benefits related to professional involvement and development, most of the directors reported that they were compensated for travel to conferences and meetings (80 percent) and for continuing education workshops expenses (72 percent). More than one-sixth were reimbursed the tuition for courses taken for academic credit (16 percent).

Job-Related Items That Influence Staying In the Position and Leaving the Position

The directors were asked to choose all the job-related influences that applied to their staying in the director position as well as what would influence their leaving the position. Of the 51 directors that responded to the question of which job-related items influenced their reason for staying in the position of director, the majority responded that the reasons were duties of the position (60.78 percent), opportunities to make changes in the library (76.47 percent), and salary (50.98 percent). More than a third of the responses included health insurance (47.06 percent), support of their employer (35.29 percent), sufficiency of resources (35.29 percent), and other benefits (33.33 percent). More than a quarter responded with job security (27.45 percent) and professional contacts (27.45 percent). Additional responses included but were not limited to having a great staff, flexibility of hours, nearing retirement, love of library, only want to work part-time, having meaningful work, and not needing to commute.

In contrast, the directors were asked which job-related items would influence their reason for leaving their position as director. Of the 50 directors that responded to the question, more than a third responded that the reasons would be insufficient salary (34 percent), lack of support from the employer (44 percent), and the inability to make changes in the library (42 percent). More than a quarter of the responses included insufficient health insurance (30 percent), insufficient resources (30 percent), and a change in duties (26 percent). Around one-tenth of the responses included difficulty in becoming part of the community (12 percent), insufficient other benefits (14 percent), lack of job security (10 percent), lack of opportunities for career advancement (8 percent), inadequate housing (8 percent), lack of personal privacy (8 percent), lack of employment opportunities for spouse (8 percent), insufficient medical services (10 percent), lack of family ties in the community (12 percent), and lack of friends in the community (14 percent). Other responses included community size (2 percent), isolation of the community (6 percent), the weather/climate (4 percent), lack of education opportunities for children (2 percent), and lack of recreational opportunities (6 percent). Other miscellaneous responses to items that would influence the respondents to leave their position as director include retirement opportunities, politics, inability to be effective, personal finances, difficulties with co-workers, want change, and a dangerous commute.

Performance Evaluations

The Idaho public library trustees were asked if they conducted some type of evaluation of their director’s performance on the job, to which 71.88 percent responded affirmatively. This subgroup was then asked to describe their evaluation program by choosing from a series of possible replies. All (100 percent) responded that the performance evaluations were reviewed by the trustees. A small portion (12 percent) responded that the evaluations were also reviewed by subordinates. The majority (72 percent) responded that the evaluations were performed on an annual basis. The majority (76 percent) also indicated that the performance evaluations are in writing.

Results Analysis

Several sets of the survey data were analyzed using SPSS. The data sets were run in order to determine the Chi-Square, the Pearson Correlation, and to graph the output. The following is the hypotheses and the results.

Idaho’s rural libraries have difficulty recruiting directors because of:
Idaho’s rural libraries have difficulty retaining directors because of:

1. **Salary** - No
2. **Community size** - No

There are some implications that can be derived from the results of the hypotheses. The salary hypotheses resulted as No, which is somewhat surprising. However, this survey is based upon the perception of the library directors and their library trustees about whether salary is a problem. If the respondents’ perceptions about salary are discarded, the result would have been Yes – Idaho’s rural libraries have difficulty recruiting and retaining directors because of salary. This would have been supported by the data obtained from the Municipal Yearbook, from the Idaho Public Library Statistics which both showed an obvious correlation between the salary and community size, and by responses to questions on the survey. This begs the question: if the directors and trustees do not perceive there to be a problem, does one still exist? The implication in regards to salary is that, while important, it isn’t the most important factor to the directors.

In regards to the hypotheses of Idaho’s rural libraries having difficulty recruiting and retaining directors because of community size, the result was No, they do not. The evidence in favor of the hypotheses was very weak, while the evidence against them was strong. One implication of the research is that there is a strong perception that there is not a problem recruiting and retaining directors because of community size. However, just over 20 percent (21.57%) of the directors surveyed stated that community size influenced them to accept a position. One implication here is that it is important to determine whether those directors currently work in large communities or in rural communities, and if the prospect of moving from a larger community to a smaller one influenced their employment decision. Another possibility is that geographical factors other than community size may affect the ability of Idaho’s rural libraries to recruit and retain directors.

In addition to the hypotheses, this research provides some interesting findings and suggestions for future research that might aid other researchers in the study of Idaho’s public library directors.

**Discussion**

There were some interesting findings derived from the research. For instance, when asked why they moved to the area, a large number of the directors stated that they moved there for their spouse’s job. It could be inferred from this that perhaps the director, in most cases, is not the main bread winner for the family. An additional interesting finding was how long the directors had served in their position, if they had worked in that library before becoming the director and, if so, for how long. About 55% of the respondents had been the director less than ten years. About half of the directors had worked in the same library before becoming the director. Of those, 30.77% had worked there for more than ten years before becoming the director. What was surprising from this was that about 42% had worked in the same library five years or less before becoming the director.

The researcher was intrigued with the outcome of two additional survey questions. The directors were asked if they were satisfied with their job. The response was that about 96% were satisfied. However, the very next question on the survey asked if they frequently think of leaving their job. The response was that almost 20% do frequently think of leaving their job. The researcher believes that it can be inferred that there are reasons other than job satisfaction for them thinking about leaving their job and that it could be important to discover and understand them.

There was a major problem that the researcher encountered in the process of this research. The Idaho Code (9-348) prevents the state library from releasing trustee information in any form that could be considered a mailing list. For this
reason, the researcher had to rely on the library directors to forward the email to their trustees so that they could be aware of the survey and encourage them to participate in it. There was the potential to have five times the number of trustee responses compared to the number of director responses. Unfortunately, the response rate for the trustees was quite low. Trustees do the actual hiring and firing of the library directors and it could be assumed that they would have the best grasp of the question of if Idaho’s rural libraries have a problem with the recruitment and retention of directors. It leaves this researcher wondering if the results would be any different with a much larger response rate.

**Future Research**

This study was only a beginning. Other psychological, social, and economic factors could be explored through further research on the recruitment and retention of Idaho’s rural library directors. Studies that focus on the use of face-to-face, in-depth interviews or case studies could be performed in order to better address and identify the complexity of factors likely to influence recruitment and retention. Factors such as the number and ages of children of Idaho’s rural library directors, all prior library-related work history, number of other staff members, and budget information are examples of variables that were not measured in this study but that may affect recruitment and retention and could be incorporated into future research.

Research of this nature could also be extended to include other types of library personnel in rural areas, including staff members other than Directors as well as personnel in school libraries, college or academic libraries, and special libraries.

Studies could be useful that identify individuals who were once employed as rural library directors but who left to work in libraries in larger communities. Research on this population could provide important new perspectives and data on recruitment and retention for smaller communities. Furthermore, similar studies investigating factors relating to recruitment and retention of library personnel, in all sizes of communities, could provide valuable comparative data, as would panel studies that followed the career paths of certain individuals over time.

Another important area that could be useful would be research, on a larger scale, that is based on the employers’ perspectives. Such research might include the objective and subjective qualities employers look for when recruiting rural library directors, difficulties experienced in the recruitment process, and past experiences with Directors who may have stayed only a short period of time. In addition, topics such as how employers perceive optimal retention in terms of length of time in the position, their opinions on salaries, benefits and education levels, and how they perceive the role of Directors might be promising areas of investigation.

Finally, studies which employ a variety of methodologies and build on existing research on recruitment and retention of personnel in rural areas from other disciplines and professions may help identify strategies that communities could use to obtain and keep personnel of all kinds. Research that compares the qualifications, education and training, experience, supply and demand, and remuneration of diverse positions such as city managers, police, sanitation workers, lawyers, health professionals, and library and information professionals could help to identify factors that could help communities work as a whole to improve recruitment and retention.

**Conclusion**

The library and information profession differs significantly from the practice of other professions, such as those in health and education fields, in the areas of credentialing. Whereas, for example, a physician or teacher requires the same credentials for practice regardless of the size of community in which they may be working, librarians are hired and so designated from a pool of enormously diverse individuals in terms of education, training, and credentials. This phenomenon has many implications for recruitment and retention of personnel, not only in rural areas. To a large extent, the local public libraries across the country exert great influence over who shall be considered librarians in their communities. With the great amount of attention being placed on the crucial role of information and access to information in society, a major priority of the library and information profession should be improving conditions for the rural librarians.
who serve as the transfer points for this information in thousands of small communities across the country and throughout eighty percent of Idaho.

Perhaps, in the future, if it is determined that there is a problem recruiting and/or retaining directors, libraries may be able to use some of the output from the questionnaire used in this research to aid them in correcting deficiencies or developing strategies. Some of the information that may be useful could be: (1) The job-related items that influence the directors' reason for staying in their current position, (2) the community-related items that influence their reason for staying in their current position, (3) the items that would influence them to accept the director position, and (4) what would influence them to leave their current position as director.

Idaho has 108 public libraries and approximately 88 percent of Idaho public libraries serve populations of under 25,000 (E.D. TAB: Public Libraries in the United States: Fiscal Year 1999). Idaho's public libraries are not immune to the variances in tight rural budgets. In recruiting directors, Idaho's public libraries need to determine what type of applicant will be attracted to the rural positions and devise strategies to recruit that type of applicant. Idaho rural libraries have no automatic claim to their future. But whatever the future of Idaho's rural public library, the burden of survival and growth is laid firmly upon the shoulders of the staff of those libraries. They must have outstanding leaders who will make effective decisions that will balance labor costs, collections, and technology in a way that will make their work significant to those who pay taxes in their communities. Whether or not one agrees with the projection that “…most public libraries, even the smallest, will be led by professional managers” (Kirwin, p. 7), the library and information profession needs to increase its knowledge about those among its ranks who manage the majority of the nation's public libraries. As Vavrek (1990, p. 37) writes: “It is no longer feasible to assume that the modern public library is capable of existing…[without] the most qualified, academically trained staff.”

Works Cited


**Appendix: Questionnaire**

**Idaho Public Library Questionnaire**

Please be assured that participants CANNOT be identified and ALL responses are completely anonymous.

Please only complete the questions that pertain to your function (i.e. directors complete only the first series of questions and trustees only complete the second series of questions).

1. I am a (Directors Complete Questions 2 through 32 and the Last Question. Trustees Complete Questions 33 through the End)

   Director, Trustee,

2. **What is the population of your community?**
   - less than 2,500
   - 2,500 - 4,999
   - 5,000 - 9,999
   - 10,000 - 14,999
   - 15,000 - 19,999
   - 20,000 - 24,999
   - 25,000 - 29,999
   - 30,000 - 39,999
   - 40,000 - 49,999
   - 50,000 or more

3. **How long have you lived here?**
   - 1 yr
   - 2 yrs
   - 3 yrs
   - 4 yrs
   - 5 yrs
   - 6 yrs
   - 7 yrs
   - 8 yrs
   - 9 yrs
   - 10 yrs
   - 11 yrs
   - 12 yrs
   - 13 yrs
   - 14 yrs
   - 15 yrs
   - 16 yrs
   - 17 yrs
   - 18 yrs
   - 19 yrs
   - 20 yrs
   - more than 20 yrs
   - less than 1 yr

4. **What was the population of the community in which you spent the majority of your growing-up years (age 0-18)?**
   - less than 2,500
   - 2,500 - 4,999
   - 5,000 - 9,999
   - 10,000 - 14,999
   - 15,000 - 19,999
   - 20,000 - 24,999
   - 25,000 - 29,999
   - 30,000 - 39,999
   - 40,000 - 49,999
   - 50,000 or more

5. **What is the population of the community in which you live?**
   - less than 2,500
   - 2,500 - 4,999
   - 5,000 - 9,999
   - 10,000 - 14,999
   - 15,000 - 19,999
   - 20,000 - 24,999
   - 25,000 - 29,999
   - 30,000 - 39,999
   - 40,000 - 49,999
   - 50,000 or more

6. **How long have you lived here?**
   - 1 yr
   - 2 yrs
   - 3 yrs
   - 4 yrs
   - 5 yrs
   - 6 yrs
   - 7 yrs
   - 8 yrs
   - 9 yrs
   - 10 yrs
   - 11 yrs
   - 12 yrs
   - 13 yrs
   - 14 yrs
   - 15 yrs
   - 16 yrs
   - 17 yrs
   - 18 yrs
   - 19 yrs
   - 20 yrs
   - more than 20 yrs
   - less than 1 yr

7. **What is the population of the community in which you work?**
   - less than 2,500
   - 2,500 - 4,999
   - 5,000 - 9,999
   - 10,000 - 14,999
   - 15,000 - 19,999
   - 20,000 - 24,999
   - 25,000 - 29,999
   - 30,000 - 39,999
   - 40,000 - 49,999
   - 50,000 or more

8. **What was the population of the community in which you spent the majority of your growing-up years (age 0-18)?**
   - less than 2,500
   - 2,500 - 4,999
   - 5,000 - 9,999
   - 10,000 - 14,999
   - 15,000 - 19,999
   - 20,000 - 24,999
   - 25,000 - 29,999
   - 30,000 - 39,999
   - 40,000 - 49,999
   - 50,000 or more

9. **Why did you move to this area? (choose all that apply)**
   - I was born here
   - I came here for the job
   - I came here for my spouses job
   - I wanted to live in a smaller community
   - I wanted to live near my relatives
   - I wanted a slower pace of living
   - Other, please specify: ___________________________

10. **Suppose you could live in whatever size community you wanted. From the choices below, please indicate**
the one in which you would most like to live.
City of 500,000 or more, 100,000 - 499,999, 50,000 - 99,999, 40,000 - 49,999, 30,000 - 39,999, 25,000 - 29,999, 20,000 - 24,999, 15,000 - 19,999, 10,000 - 14,999, 5,000 - 9,999, 2,500 - 4,999, less than 2,500,

11. Now choose which size of community you would least like to live in.
City of 500,000 or more, 100,000 - 499,999, 50,000 - 99,999, 40,000 - 49,999, 30,000 - 39,999, 25,000 - 29,999, 20,000 - 24,999, 15,000 - 19,999, 10,000 - 14,999, 5,000 - 9,999, 2,500 - 4,999, less than 2,500,

12. How long have you been the library director
less than 1 yr, 1 yr, 2 yrs, 3 yrs, 4 yrs, 5 yrs, 6 yrs, 7 yrs, 8 yrs, 9 yrs, 10 yrs, 11 yrs, 12 yrs, 13 yrs, 14 yrs, 15 yrs, 16 yrs, 17 yrs, 18 yrs, 19 yrs, 20 yrs, more than 20 yrs,

13. Did you work in this library before becoming the director? (If no, skip Question 14)
(Yes/No)

14. If your answer to question 13 is yes, for how long?
less than 1 yr, 1 yr, 2 yrs, 3 yrs, 4 yrs, 5 yrs, 6 yrs, 7 yrs, 8 yrs, 9 yrs, 10 yrs, more than 10 yrs,

15. Are you employed full-time or part-time? (less than 35 hrs per week = part-time)
full-time, part-time,

16. How much are you paid per hour?
Minimum wage, Minimum wage - $7, $7.01 - $8, $8.01 - $9, $9.01 - $10, $10.01 to $11, $11.01 - $12, $12.01 - $13, $13.01 - $14, $14.01 - $15, $15.01 - $16, $16.01 - $17, $17.01 - $18, $18.01 - $19, $19.01 - $20, More than $20 per hour, Volunteer (no pay), Other, please specify: _______________________________

17. Which of the following benefits does your library pay for you? (check all that apply)
Health insurance, Life insurance, Retirement, Sick Leave, Vacation, Travel to meetings, conferences, etc., Membership in library professional groups, Continuing education workshops, Tuition for academic credits, Other, please specify: _______________________________

18. Which of the following job related items influences your reason for staying in your current position. Please check all that apply.
Salary, Health insurance, other benefits, Professional contacts, Support of employer, Sufficiency of resources to carry out job, Job security, Opportunity for career advancement, Duties of the job, Opportunities to make changes in the library, Other, please specify: _______________________________

19. Which of the following community related items influences your reason for staying in your current position. Please check all that apply.
Availability of Housing, Geographic location of community, Weather/climate of the area, How safe you feel in the community, Employment opportunities for your spouse, Availability of medical services, Recreational opportunities, Friendships I have in the community, Family ties I have in the community, Participation in community organizations, Size of the community, Educational opportunities for children, Other, please specify: _______________________________

20. Which of the following items influenced you to accept the director position? Please check all that apply.
Housing, Geographic location of community, Weather/climate of the area, How safe you feel in the community, Employment opportunities for your spouse, Educational opportunities for your children, Availability of medical services, Recreational opportunities, Friendships I have in the community, Family ties I have in the community, Size of the community, Salary, Health insurance, Other benefits, Opportunity for career advancement, Duties of the job, Opportunities to make changes in the library, Other, please specify: _______________________________

21. Which of the following would influence your reason for leaving your current position as director
Insufficient salary, Insufficient Health insurance, Insufficient other benefits, Lack of Professional contacts, Lack of support from my employer, Insufficient resources to carry out my job, Lack of job security, Lack of opportunity for career advancement, Change in the duties of my job, Inability to make changes in the library, Inadequate housing, Isolation of the community, Weather/climate of the area, Lack of personal privacy, Lack of employment opportunities for spouse, Lack of educational opportunities for children, Insufficient medical services, Lack of recreational activities, Isolation from family, Isolation from friends, Size of the community, Difficulty in becoming part of the community, Other, please specify:

___________________________

22. Is it your perception that Idaho public libraries have difficulty recruiting directors? (Yes/No)

23. Is it your perception that Idaho public libraries have difficulty retaining directors? (Yes/No)

24. Please indicate the highest level of education you have achieved.
High school diploma/GED, Some college, Bachelors degree, College degree with library concentration, Masters degree in library/information science, Other Masters degree, Other, please specify: ____________________________

25. Please indicate your sex.
Female, Male,

26. Your age
18 - 20, 21 - 25, 26 - 30, 31 - 35, 36 -40, 41 -50, 51 - 60, 61 - 65, older than 65, younger than 18,

27. What best describes your marital status?
Single, Married, Divorced, Widowed, Other, please specify: ____________________________

28. What best describes your ethnic background?
White, Hispanic, American Indian, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Other, please specify: ____________________________

29. Which of the categories below does your total household income fall into, before taxes?
Below $5,000, $5,000 - $9,999, $10,000 - $19,999, $20,000 - $29,999, $30,000 - $39,999, $40,000 - $49,999, $50,000 - $59,999, $60,000 - $69,999, $70,000 - $79,999, $80,000 - $89,999, $90,000 - $99,999, $100,000 and above,

30. Generally speaking, I am satisfied with my job. (Yes/No)

31. I frequently think of leaving this job. (Yes/No)

32. Knowing what you do, about your job as director, would you apply for it if it was advertised today? (please answer and skip to Question 45) (Yes/No)

33. What is the community size of the library where you are a trustee?
less than 2,500, 2,500 - 4,999, 5,000 - 9,999, 10,000 - 14,999, 15,000 - 19,999, 20,000 - 24,999, 25,000 - 29,999, 30,000 - 39,999, 40,000 - 49,999, 50,000 or more,

34. Has your library had difficulty in retaining directors? (Yes/No)

35. If yes, is this due to (check all that apply) (If no, go to Question 36)

Lack of applicants, Low salary, Lack of suitable applicants, Lack of community services, Community size, Geographic location of the community, Lack of educational opportunities, Lack of jobs for spouse or significant other, Position is only part-time, Budget constraints, Other, please specify: ___________________________

36. How does your library recruit for open director positions? (choose all that apply)
Word of mouth, Local papers, Trade magazines (Library Journal), Job service, e-mail listserv, online website(s), Other, please specify: ___________________________

37. How have the trustees in your library approached any director recruitment difficulties?
Promoted Internally, Recruited less qualified applicant, Improved the pay, Advertised out of the area, Did not change anything, Other, please specify: ___________________________

38. In recruiting past directors, what region were they hired from? (choose all that apply)
Hired from within the community, Hired from within your region of Idaho, Hired from within Idaho, Hired from the Northwest, Hired Nationally, Other, please specify: ___________________________

39. Is it your perception that Idaho public libraries have difficulty recruiting directors?  
(Yes/No)

40. Does your organization have a formal evaluation program?  
(Yes/No)

41. If yes, would you describe the evaluation program as (choose all that apply)
Reviewed by trustees, Reviewed by subordinates, Annual, Semi-annual, Peer review, Written, Verbal, Other, please specify: ___________________________

42. Has your library had difficulty in retaining directors?  
(Yes/No)

43. If yes, which of the following choices do you feel contribute to the difficulty in retaining directors in your library? (choose all that apply)
Lack of benefits, Lack of available housing, Geographic location of the community, Community size, Low salary, Budget constraints, Lack of support staff, Lack of recreational opportunities, Lack of professional development opportunities, Lack of medical services, Lack of educational opportunities, Other, please specify: ___________________________

44. Is it your perception that Idaho public libraries have difficulty retaining directors?  
(Yes/No)

45. Your input throughout this questionnaire will be extremely valuable to the study or rural libraries. I appreciate your willingness to give of your time and thoughts. In conclusion, do you have any further comments?  
(Long Answer) ______________________________________________________

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