

2008 Wyoming Library Workforce Survey

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The 2008 Wyoming Library Workforce Survey was a project of the Wyoming State Library,
Wyoming Library Association and the WYLD Training Committee.

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Introduction

In spring of 2008, the Wyoming State Library, Wyoming Library Association (WLA) and WYLD (Wyoming Libraries Database) Training Committee undertook a survey of the Wyoming library workforce.

The survey covered demographics, salaries and benefits, training needs, and WLA involvement. Questions it was intended to address included: How much opportunity do Wyoming library workers have to pursue continuing education and training? How can training opportunities be tailored to meet the workforce's needs? What will be the impact of retirements as the workforce ages? How competitive are library salaries and benefits?

Workers in 355 Wyoming libraries – all academic and public libraries and all known school and special libraries – were given the opportunity to complete the survey. Based on library directory lists and public and academic library data provided to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the workforce was estimated at 1,337 people. The Wyoming State Library mailed out 1,749 surveys – enough for all estimated workers at each site and up to four extra at each site to cover any underestimates. Libraries were also invited to request additional copies if needed.

There were 812 completed surveys returned and 220 blank forms. The return rate of completed forms to estimated workers was 60.73%. The response rate was highest from public libraries. Respondents were self-selected, so this may not constitute a representative sample. Where this report makes references to the “library workforce,” it should be noted that it refers to the group that responded to the workforce survey.

The Wyoming Library Workforce Report is organized with first a summary of all responses, then data broken down by library type. Findings in this report are presented as tabulated; no effort has been made to weight any of the data.

The State Library can, upon request, create custom reports from the Wyoming Library Workforce data, provided that the request does not result in personally identifiable data being released. For more information, or for questions about this report, contact Susan Vittitow, WSL Statistics Librarian, at 1-800-264-1281 (press 3, then 3), 307-777-5915 (Cheyenne) or svitti@state.wy.us.

Executive summary

- The Wyoming library workforce is aging. More than half of respondents are age 50 and older. Only in academic libraries do workers under 50 outnumber those 50 and older.
- Not surprisingly, the library workforce is female-dominated: 89% of survey responses came from women.
- More than a third of workers responding to the survey have been employed in a Wyoming library less than 5 years. More than half (170 of 271) of these newer employees work in public libraries
- The Wyoming library workforce is well-educated – more than half hold a bachelor’s degree or higher. In Wyoming’s general population, only 21.9% of residents age 25 and older hold at least a bachelor’s degree (U.S. Census 2000).
- By a large margin, Wyoming public library workers were the least likely to hold one of five library- and/or education-related credentials listed on the survey. National Center for Education Statistics data from 2005 show that Wyoming public libraries ranked last in the nation in employing ALA-MLS librarians: 22.4% of total staff FTEs nationally were held by ALA-MLS librarians, while in Wyoming, it was 9.1%.
- About one-third of respondents reported that they were generalists, i.e. a lone librarian or one of a small staff, reflecting Wyoming’s large number of small libraries. It was estimated that 162 of the 355 libraries contacted had only one staff member. This is most pronounced in schools, where 134 of 287 libraries were believed to have only one worker, and 72% of workers classified themselves as generalists.
- Just over one-third of respondents work part-time. The largest proportion were in public libraries, where 182 of 413 (44%) reported working part-time. “Full-time” is typically 40 hours or more, although in public libraries approximately half of full-time respondents reported working between 30 to 39.5 hours in their regularly scheduled work week.
- The average reported annual salary for a full-time Wyoming library worker is \$45,104, and the median is \$44,000. Reported salaries are highest in school libraries (average \$55,037, median \$56,800) and lowest in public libraries (average \$36,501, median \$33,000).
- The average reported wage for a part-time library worker was \$11.79, and the median was \$10.50. Reported part-time wages were highest in academic libraries (average \$13.81, median \$12.97) and lowest in public libraries (average \$11.67, median \$10.08). For the most part, these averages fall below the American Library Association-Allied Professional Association (ALA-APA) 2008 endorsement of a \$13.00 per hour minimum wage for all library workers.

- In an era of soaring health care costs, more than 95% of full-time library workers reported being eligible for employer-sponsored health insurance. Only a little more than one-third of part-time workers are eligible for health insurance.
- Approximately one-fourth (187 of 812) of the Wyoming library workforce surveyed plans to retire within the next five years, and 81.3% (152 of 187) of those planning to retire say they have employer-sponsored retirement benefits. Among all full-time workers, 93.7% report that their employer offers retirement.
- School library workers appear to have less support from their libraries for obtaining training and attending conferences and meetings than workers in any other library type. Just under half say they are given both opportunity and financial support to attend conferences, as contrasted with more than two-thirds of workers in academic, public and special libraries.
- Overwhelmingly, library workers report that they would like to receive their training in a face-to-face classroom or lecture setting. Although delivery of training by webinars has been increasing, it encounters strong resistance, particularly in school libraries, and, to a lesser extent, in public libraries.
- One of the biggest barriers to participating in training was “Topics not related to my work,” reported by 15% of all library workers and 26% of academic library workers. Just over half (51.7%) of respondents reported one or more barriers to training.
- School libraries have the lowest rates of conference attendance and the most barriers to training. However, if State Library responses are excluded, special library workers’ conference attendance is lower and barriers are higher than even in the schools.
- Public libraries have the highest level of involvement in the Wyoming Library Association (WLA) with 49% of public library survey respondents reporting membership. WLA involvement is lowest in school libraries; only 70 of 243 respondents (29%) reported membership.
- About one-third (106 of 327, 32,4%) of WLA members have served as an officer or a committee member in the organization.
- Most library workers receive information from or about WLA through email or through their director and/or co-workers. School libraries have the highest percentage of workers who have not received any information about WLA – about one-fourth.
- Almost 40 % of workers in WYLD libraries would like training on one or more WYLD functions. The most requests from WYLD libraries are for training on the licensed databases and Directors’ Station.