

Changing Professional Roles in Academic Libraries: Structures and Relationships

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Definitions

Library Technician

- A graduate from a two-year diploma program from a recognized institution
- Also called: library assistant, paraprofessional, technical assistant

Librarian

- A graduate from a master's degree program accredited by the ALA
- Also called university librarian, college librarian
 - Not used to refer to deans or chief librarians.

Literature Review

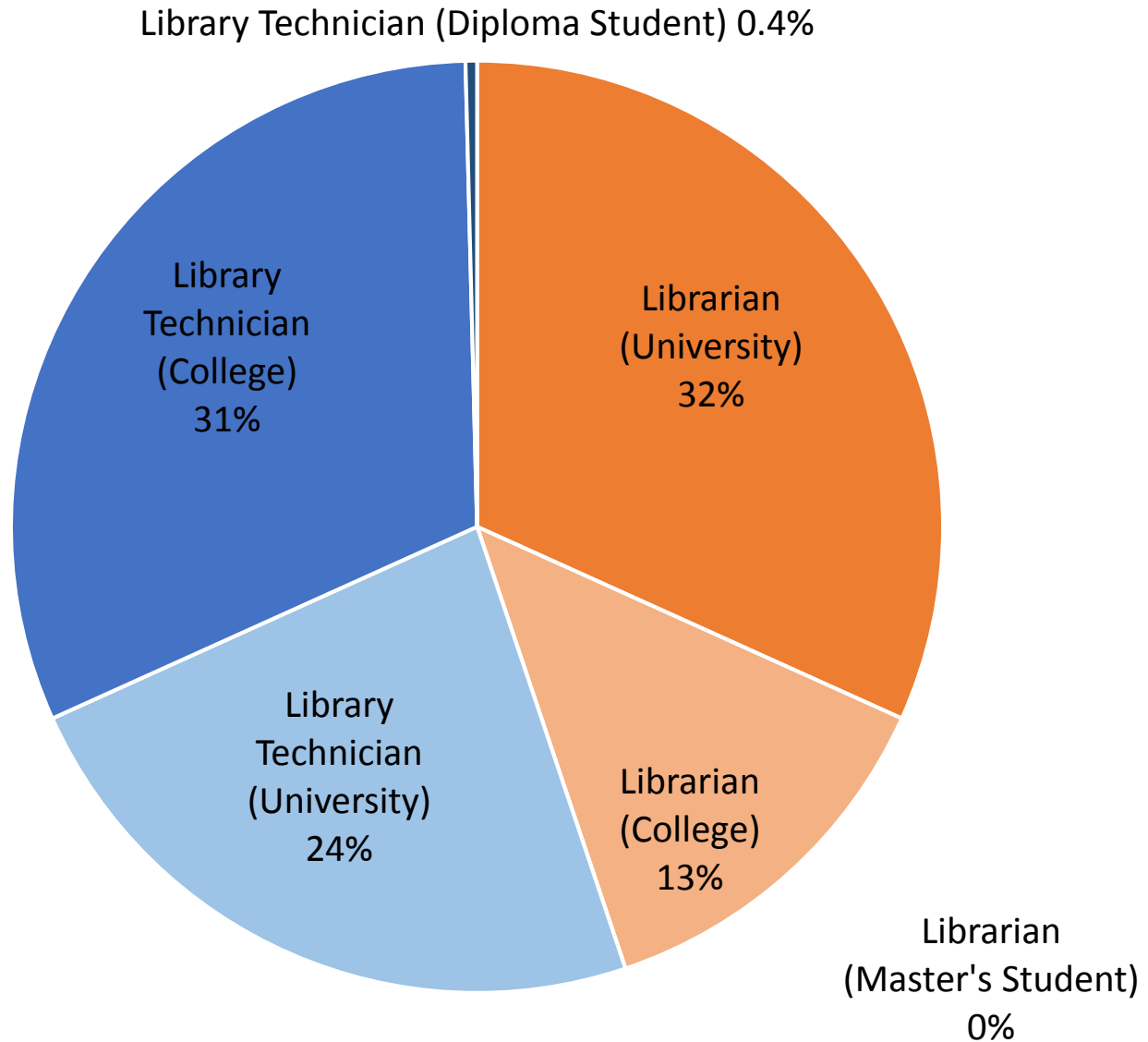
Topics

- Trends
- Staffing
 - Reference Desk
 - Cataloguing
- Faculty Status
- Compensation
- In-group Bias
- Curriculum
- Deprofessionalization

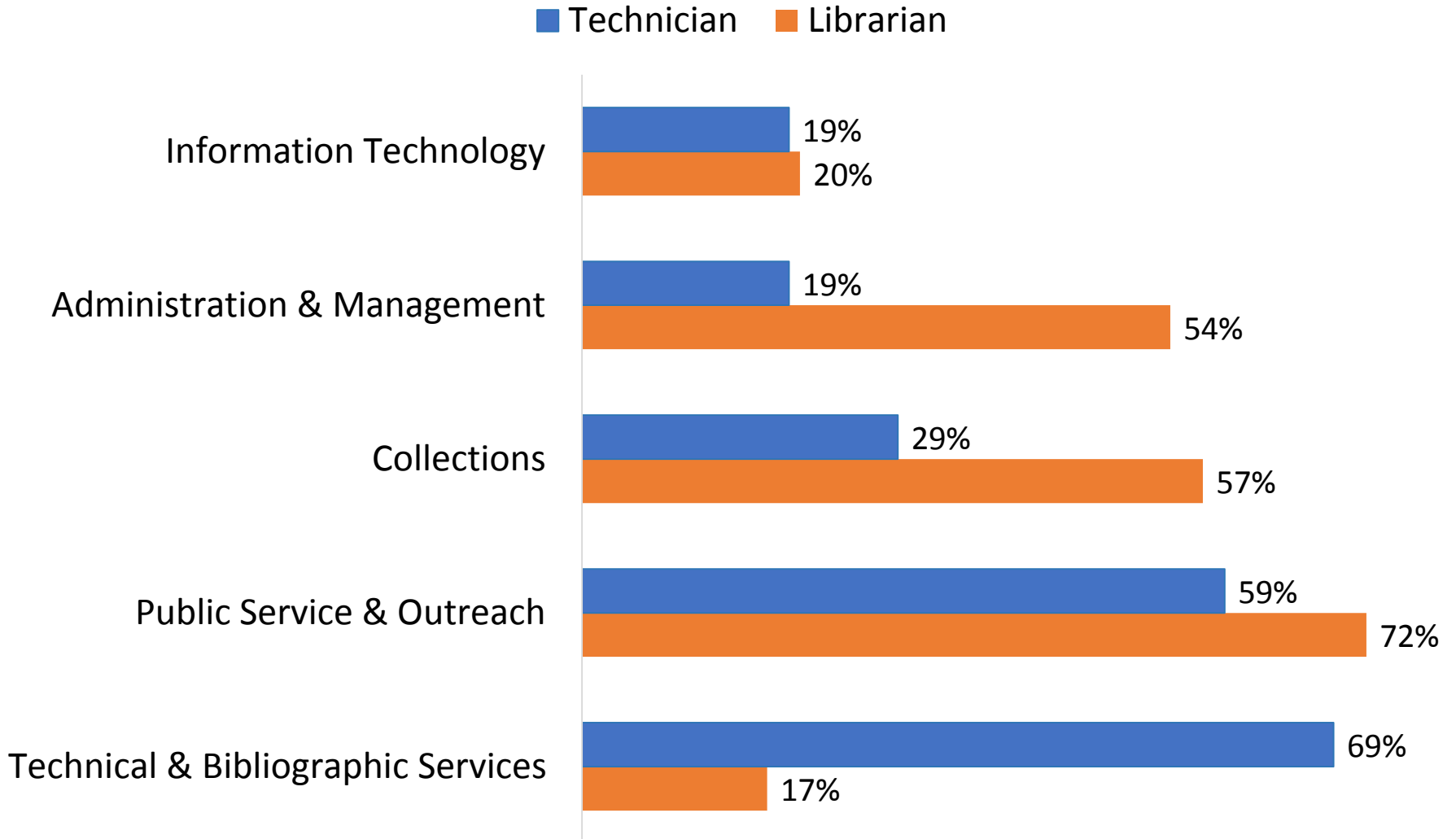
Key Articles

- Fragola, Marian G. "Intergroup Dynamics: Librarians and Paraprofessionals in the Workplace." *Library Leadership & Management* 23.1 (2009): 17-25. *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts with Full Text*.
- Hill, Claire. "The Professional Divide: Examining Workplace Relationships Between Librarians And Library Technicians." *Australian Library Journal* 63.1 (2014): 23-34. *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts with Full Text*.
- Litwin, Rory. "The Library Paraprofessional Movement and the Deprofessionalization of Librarianship." *Progressive Librarian* 33 (2009): 43-60. *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts with Full Text*.

Results: Respondent Qualifications



Results: Major Work Responsibility by Role Title



Changes in Work Responsibility

“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. So I have fewer staff to supervise in Technical Services and less involvement in daily workflows.”

(Librarian)

Perceptions of Professional Relationships

Strongly Agree/Agree	Librarian	Library Technician
___ are important to the effective functioning of a library or information setting.	89%	85%
___ work as hard as ___.	70%	73%
___ could do my job.	25%	56%
I respect ___ and the work they do.	89%	87%
Library Technicians are doing tasks that Librarians used to do.	65%	84%

Perceptions of Professional Relationships

Strongly Agree/Agree	Librarian	Library Technician
There is a conflict between the two professions in terms of working together effectively.	27%	34%
Schools emphasize the difference, creating a divide before even entering the profession.	25%	45%
An in-group bias towards one's own profession is natural.	34%	43%
Radical role changes drives conflict.	52%	64%
Lack of knowledge of each other's roles drives conflict.	62%	79%
Conflict may arise because of the specific workplace environment.	51%	76%

Perceptions of Professional Relationships

“Job insecurity - lack of opportunities leads to librarians taking tech positions and/or shrinking budgets leads to techs hired in traditionally librarian roles. In theory we do not compete for the same jobs but in practice it can happen and lead to conflict from both sides.”

(Library Technician)

Solutions to Role Differential

Library Technician

- Making roles clearer to everyone in the workplace
- Library associations work together

Other:

- Recognition of work
- Job sharing/shadowing
- Fiscal compensation

Librarian

- Putting more focus on understanding roles during schooling
- Making roles clearer to everyone in the workplace

Other:

- Removing divide altogether,
- Merging professional associations
- Distributing tasks by ability and not rank

Solutions to Role Differential

“Less segregation will help. Have teams, committees, working groups, and/or projects where both librarians and library technicians work together. In my experience working on a project side-by-side with all of my colleagues, both librarians, library technicians, and faculty, have given most of us on the team a better mutual understanding of each other's unique roles and skill sets.”

(Librarian)

Our Solutions...

- Library school(s) curricula
 - Discuss role differences
 - Align competencies taught with workplace responsibilities
- Workplace
 - Role clarification from administration
 - Professional development for all
 - Maintain a respectful environment
 - Fluid organizational structures

Future Research

- Workplace/Curriculum matching
- Complex research methods
 - Qualitative Interviews/Investigations
 - Ethnographic approach
- Role of faculty/staff associations/unions
- Administration & management
 - Knowledge & attitudes regarding different staffing levels
 - Effort undertaken to improve workplace culture
 - Effective organizational structures

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