

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

**How do you define rural?**

A library is rural if it is isolated, regardless of whether it is part of a larger county system or in a small town. Public library in AK

I define rural as towns with a population of fewer than 5,000. Our system has a total population of 60,500 in a two county area of 2,215 square miles. One county has 37 persons per square mile and the other one only has 16 persons per square mile. There are more deer per square mile than people. Public library in North Central PA

I define rural as a town whose main patrons are in agriculture and/or commuters to a larger town for employment. Also, a large number of the patrons are not included in the tax base for the town. Public library in KS

I'd have to say "off the beaten path." In Alaska we live in an off-the-road system, in a fly-in village or community. Public library in AK

An Alaskan, I consider a library rural if it is not on a main road system near a city. I live in a community of about 1,100, 300 miles from the nearest city, Anchorage. For the most part, we are accessible by airplane; there are no ferries or trains available via the water. However, large vessels and barges deliver freight seasonal to the area. Public library in AK

I consider my town of Nome, Alaska, to be rural. It has no stoplights, mostly dirt streets and is accessible only by boat, ship or air service. Public library in AK

My home is rural because I must drive fly more than 30 miles to get to stores, restaurants and theaters. School library in AK

Our library system serves 6 communities in a 31 mile stretch of shoreline. Most adults work in our larger towns of Kaneohe or Honolulu. We were once the hub of a sugar plantation, and agriculture still plays a role in job opportunities. Farmers are trying a variety of crops to see what grows well in our area. Our sweet corn and watermelons are well known. Public/school library, HI

To me, a rural community has a population of less than 10,000. Over that, I consider a medium-sized library. My library is a rural/suburban mix, with 3 small towns, each under 1200 people. About half of our population is suburban, as we border on a small city of 80,000. That is where the bulk of our population and money comes from. Illinois libraries are supported solely by property taxes, so the more homes in your district, the more money you take in. There are several libraries in our county and in our system that are much smaller than ours. I don't know how they manage. Illinois does not have giant county library systems that serve rural areas. I have a problem relating to those librarians, because to me they are a large library – their constituency is just more spread out. They still have the money, staff and expertise that most small libraries lack. Public library in IL

In Indiana, small towns in rural areas are grouped together and are defined as a town/township. Each library serves at least one town and the township in which it is located. Indiana libraries are governmental units, so we have our own tax rates as we are not part of another governmental unit. The Small and Medium Sized Libraries Division of the Indiana

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

Library Federation responds to the unique needs of libraries serving populations of fewer than 25,000. A small library is defined as serving a population of fewer than 10,000. The small libraries are located away from an urban center. Public library in IN

In our city, we define rural patrons as those living outside of the city limits. Public library in IA

Some say 25,000 or under, some say 10,000 or under, but I think the small or rural library has more to do with a feeling of connectedness to your community. Small, for me, has come to mean coziness / welcoming / confidence in our place in our small worlds. Large or small populations can achieve this feeling. Do we focus on numbers or people? Do we focus on our achievements or our worth to our cities/towns? I think those who define themselves as being from a small library tend to choose the latter in both cases. Public library in IA

Rural is considered a farming community and a small town which patrons need to travel 40 to 50 miles for shopping malls, etc. It is usually a close-knit community where people know their neighbors and are willing to lend a helping hand. Public library in IA

I define rural as an area that relies on farming as the main economic contributor to the community. Public library in IA

I've heard "rural" described as "more than 20 minutes to McDonald's", but I think that, in today's world with enhanced communications technologies, rural would be defined more by population densities. One county where I worked (in the public library) had an average of about 15 people per square mile -- mostly concentrated in the southern part. The local school district was geographically larger than the state of Rhode Island. I was there by circumstance, but I grew to love it. Public library in IA

Although in general I think of it as under 10,000, I believe my county at 19,000 is still very rural. I also believe that one consider the area's economy: My county relies upon agriculture. Public library in IA

Rural seems to be any area that is not metropolitan. In Iowa that would mean towns other than Waterloo, Des Moines, Davenport, Sioux City, Council Bluffs, and Cedar Rapids/Iowa City are all rural. This is as opposed to 'living within the city limits' or 'living on a farm or other unincorporated area'. Public library in IA

A rural area has a low population density and large stretches of open land. Public library in IA

If farmland is within or next to city limits, it's a rural area. Public library in IA

A rural area is defined by one or more of the following factors: a population of fewer than 8,000; functions as a "stand-alone" community (not a suburb of a larger community); an agricultural economy. Public library in IA

A rural county or town must have a population of less than 5,000. Our town has 1489. Public library in IA

I usually think of rural as living out of a city. Public library in IA

Rural to me is a library in a town of under 5,000 people. Public library in IA

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

I would say we are excellent example of rural library. In 2000 our town had a population of 414. We are now smaller. We also serve the surrounding four townships. We service the local school, which is the only way we maintain a high circulation. Public library in IA

To be considered rural, a town must have a population of less than 2,000 and must be surrounded by farms and acreages. Most people have to commute to other towns for employment. Public library in IA

A rural library is probably considered to be rural because it is located in a small town. Public library in IA

Rural patrons receive mail through rural delivery. Public library in IA

I define rural as an area that relies on farming as the main economic contributor to the community. Public library in IA

A rural population is stand-alone community with an agrarian base and a population of less than 25,000. Library association in IA

A rural library may serve a city with fewer than 500 residents and/or serve rural patrons within a 15-mile radius. Medium size libraries are at least 25 miles away and a large is no closer than 45 miles away. Public library in IA

A rural area is characterized by open country, small towns, and an agricultural economy. Public library in IA

Rural to me is a town under 2,000 people. Public library in IA

I define rural as a community of less than 10,000 and more than 30 miles from a larger town. Public library in IA

I serve a community of 6700, with a county population of about 15,000 (spread over 3100 square miles) and about 90 miles from a community greater than 10,000. Public library in IA

Our 30 square mile county has 2900 people and our community has 1200. Public library in KS

I believe any library that serves a patronage of 25,000 or fewer could be considered rural, especially if many patrons live in rural areas or on farms. Public library in Southeast KS

I define rural as a city or county with a total population of fewer than ten thousand persons. Public library in KS

A rural area may have an agrarian economy, a population of fewer than 10,000, and/or a population density of less than 30 people per square mile. Public library in KS

I would say I live in a rural area. I have to drive an hour to see a movie, buy clothing, and if I were young enough, to have a baby in a hospital. (Of course, they come when they want to. Local hospitals do not provide obstetrical care.) I think rural might be considered living in an area where you are an hour's drive from a town with a population of 25,000 or more. Rural might also be considered living in an area where much of the income is derived from

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

agriculture, although that might be too narrow of a definition. Public library in KS

I would define rural as any town that is 30+ miles from a city with a population of 100,000 or greater. Public library in KS

I define rural libraries as those serving populations of 10,000 or less. Academic library in MT

Often small towns or villages lie beside farm land or land that was once used for farming. There is little if any public transportation, and it lies beyond the large city and the suburban areas immediately surrounding it. Public library in PA

In Pennsylvania we joke that a rural area has "more cows/sheep than people." Though most of the libraries in our two counties are one or two hours from Pittsburgh, I would define them as being rural: the libraries serve towns with populations of 1-5,000, and the library is the only real community resource outside the local school district. Public library in PA

Our district serves 37,217 patrons spread over 934 square miles. I definitely think this is rural. We are too far from the coast (44 miles) to get coastal wealth and too far from most everything else to experience growth. I like living here and I am not from here, but being this isolated is not for everyone. Public library in SC

To me RURAL means Away From Urban Areas (in the country). It also means small. However, "small" is relative. The Census Bureau defines "Rural" as having a population of up to 50,000. That puts ALL Alaskan cities except Anchorage in the "Rural" classification. But, for us, these officially "Rural" towns are "The City" where we go for the nearest medical, legal, shopping, etc. In Alaska, "real Rural" means "Isolation". Public library in AK

**How did you become a rural librarian - preference, choice, circumstance?**

Circumstance: I lived here before I became a librarian. I went to library school, returned to my husband and my cat and found a job here. Public library in WY

Partly PREFERENCE:

a) Both my husband and I prefer small towns.

Partly CHOICE:

I chose library work whenever possible.

a) After college I fell into a Library Assistant job and loved it. I continued in that capacity, at two different libraries, until moving to Alaska. I also took some courses toward an MLS. However, in those pre-internet days, the move to Alaska ended that pursuit.

b) Arriving in Alaska (Pelican) I discovered that the tiny, 1½ person library had no opening, so I took a job at the fish plant. 20 years later, when the librarian retired, I applied for the position and quit my bookkeeping job at the fish plant.

Partly CIRCUMSTANCE:

a) My husband's dream of going to Alaska brought me to Alaska as a bride.

b) Alaskan towns are willing to hire non-librarians as librarians (no MLS or MLIS degree or any library experience required). The great support of the Alaska State Library makes it possible for us non-librarians to adequately do the job.

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

c) The library job became available (librarian retired) at the same time my bookkeeping job at the fish plant was cut to part time (plant hit hard times). I later quit the plant job altogether. Public library in AK

I came to a rural community by choice, from New York City. School library in WY

I grew up in the area and I returned to work here as a librarian by choice. Public library in North Central PA

I answered an ad in the Seattle Times in 1991 after I finished library school in Seattle. I don't drive on freeways, so I always knew that I would end up in a small town somewhere. I wanted to walk to work, and that's what I do! I love cities – I travel to New York and Washington, D.C., regularly – but prefer to make change happen by being a big fish in small town, rather than part of a larger whole. Public library in AK

I grew up in rural Alaska, and it is home to me. I was asked to be the librarian by the principal of our school. I wasn't quite sure about it at first, but I really do enjoy doing what I do. Librarians have a fun job; we're not stuck up old ladies sitting at a desk shushing our patrons. Public library in AK

I became a rural librarian partly by choice and partly by circumstance. I prefer rural areas and I had applied for librarian positions only in rural areas. Public library in AK

I retired from a school librarian position in Honolulu and filled a vacancy in our local library. It is difficult to get librarians to come to the "country" - an hour's drive from Honolulu. Public and school library, HI

I became a rural librarian by circumstance. I graduated from college in 1999 with a degree in Family Finance, but was not able to get a job as a counselor because I was a "woman" and an Air Force wife. I was a "stay-at-home mom" who did a lot of volunteer work, some of it with The Friends of the Library. When I decided to go back to work, I used my networking and started as a librarian and worked my way up the ladder. Public library in KS

Circumstance – this is the job that was open when I was looking. But I absolutely love it. I love the variety, the challenge of meeting the service needs of our population. I have been here 23 years, and I wouldn't go back to a large library. Public library in IL

Jobs were scarce in my home state of Indiana after I earned my masters in 1976. I wanted to work and live in Indiana; though I studied at San Jose State I did not find my California sojourn beneficial or enjoyable. I grew up outside of a medium-sized town and lived in urban areas. I wanted out of large urban or medium-sized towns, so a job serving a population 4,987 was a perfect fit. There is one other library in the county. The county population is about 24,000, so we are rather small. Public library in IN

Choice and circumstance led me to rural librarianship. I was living in Wichita when family illness led me to move back to my hometown. When the directorship opened up, I applied. Public library in Southeast KS

Our library is a city public library in the city limits. But our city is still in a rural area. My husband's job brought us here. Public library in IA

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

I was a part-timer at the library and had the opportunity to become Library Director. Public library in IA

Circumstance led me to my current position. I live in the rural area and had tried driving to a town about 25 miles away, but I just didn't like the commute. When my current position opened I applied. Public library in IA

All three played a role in my accepting this position. I started as children's librarian to have part-time work when my children were young. My husband and I farm outside of our small community and it was convenient to be able to work in the town where my kids went to school and had many activities. After 15 years, my job turned into being the director and full-time. Public library in IA

Personally, circumstance played a huge role for me. I have a BA in English, and happened to take a part-time job at the public library where I attended college. I fell in love with the library setting, and when I moved to the area I knew would be my permanent location, I sought out library work. There just happened to be smaller libraries in this area. Public library in IA

As circumstance would have it, my current job opened when I began my job search. However, I have found I really like the small, personal, do it all, atmosphere. Public library in IA

I was led primarily by circumstance. My husband farms in our county. Of course, I could drive to a larger area, but this has worked out very well for me. And I love my work, my staff, and my customers. Public library in IA

The McGregor Library was my childhood library. I loved the library as a child and I love it now. I went to college, got an English degree. I didn't have a master plan and I didn't know what I was going to do with my life, but things seem to come together. That could be condensed into preference and circumstance...although choices along the way also brought me here. I enrolled in public library management courses. I love learning and sharing information and ideas with people. I'm fortunate to have a job that fits my interests. Public library in IA

I had previously worked at 2 libraries and saw an advertisement for a director so I applied. I figured with my business background I had a shot. Public library in IA

Circumstance when my husband became a pastor in a small town. The library director wanted to quit as director. I was hired for her position and she is now my assistant director. I love reading and people so it's a great job, except for the salary. Public library in IA

First: circumstance; Later: choice because of the varied job responsibilities, knowledge of patrons and community, and it's easier than driving 1/2 hour to a larger library-assuming I'd be hired which isn't an absolute! Public library in IA

My husband is a farmer, and so working in my rural area is much more convenient than relocating to a larger town or library, but it's also my choice to work in my current community. I could drive to a larger town, but I really like where I'm at and what my present duties and challenges. Public library in IA

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

Our small town of 213 had an older librarian I met through church. I began helping her and now 30 years later I am still here. Public library in IA

Becoming a librarian was both choice and circumstance. I took library management 1 & 2 and the library director retired and I applied for her job. I enjoy working at the library and had been working part time before that at the library and also doing story time. I have a degree in human services also. Public library in IA

Choice, preference and circumstance all led me to this position. I started as children's librarian to have part-time work when my children were young. My husband and I farm outside of our small community and it was convenient to be able to work in the town where my kids went to school and had many activities. After 15 years, my job turned into being the director and full-time. Public library in IA

I became a rural librarian by preference, choice and circumstance. My family wanted to avoid suburban life and we were willing to live in a downtown (or neighborhood) of a large city or in a rural area. Circumstance provided the current job as the best option. Public library in IA

I became a rural librarian by circumstance. I married and moved to a rural area where my husband has farming interests. Public library in KS

I was led by preference and choice. I want to live in smaller towns. Currently I am in a town of about 12,500, in an area that is 60% agricultural. Public library in KS

I became a rural librarian by circumstance, due to my marriage to a farmer. However, I don't think I would ever enjoy living in an urban area, meaning a town with more than a population of 50,000 to 75,000. Public library in KS

I became one by preference. I wanted to start as a director. Public library in KS

I chose to work at this library due to family living in the area and the opportunity to work with my tribe. Academic library in MT

I came to work in my library through circumstance. I moved back home to care for my ailing mother and I volunteered at the library. The librarian left one month after I began work. I had three weeks of training before I took over. I have since earned my MLS. Public library in OH

I am a rural librarian because of circumstance, but I love it and probably will never change! Public library in PA

I came to my library through circumstance. Does anyone "choose" to be treated or compensated this way? I love small, rural libraries, but I hate that many librarians are treated as second-class citizens. We are not valued by our board, who speaks "at" us rather than to us. I feel we aren't acknowledged as valued professionals who know our community and their library needs. Public library in PA

After a time working in an urban library I accepted a directorship of a rural area and I LOVED it. I like a challenge and have been happiest in rural places where public libraries are way

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

down on the list with the local politicians. To be fair, my current location does not have a lot of money to go around. It is a struggle every year to balance the budget in this rural area where there is always high unemployment. Everything you do in a rural area can be meaningful even when it feels like you are beating your head against a brick wall. I am about to the burnout stage here. The longest I have stayed in one place is seven years. I left my former rural position for a wealthier place and I am likely to do that again in a year or two. I have almost worked myself to death here. I think it has been worth it, but I can only do this for so long before I get beyond exhaustion. Public library in SC

I was working as a part-time bookmobile librarian, a part-time position. When the director announced her retirement, I applied for the position, interviewed and was hired without a library degree. My credentials included a college degree, experience as a former high school English teacher and 3-4 years experience as a library page, circulation librarian and bookmobile librarian. I am a native of Torrington County and cannot imagine living anywhere else. Public library in WY

Circumstance led me to my current position. My husband was hired for a job here in Laramie. We are both archivists, but there was no job opportunity for me. Fortunately, I have my MLS and was able to find a position at my library. Public library in WY

I chose to work in a rural library. I wanted to be able to live in the community in which I worked, because libraries and librarians should be a vital part of the communities they serve. While it is possible to be a part of an urban or even suburban community, I've had my fill of those environments. Now I live in a tiny western town, 30 miles from the nearest fast food joint and over 100 miles from a mall. The library is also many miles from a bookstore or a place with publicly accessible computers, so we play a large role in this community. Public/school library in WY

I became a rural librarian 24 years ago when my husband got a job in a small Wyoming town. I taught social studies in the middle school but had done some endorsement work in library before arriving. Wyoming was experiencing a boom, and our community's new elementary school sought to expand its part-time library position to fulltime. They have kept me here full time with a full time assistant and I can attest to the importance of having professional reading guidance at the elementary level. School library in WY

**What are some fundamental differences in the population served, their needs and general practice between rural, small town and city librarianship if you have experienced other settings?**

In my experience, small town librarians know their user group intimately, which colors some decisions about collection development and programming. This intimacy also provides a wonderful opportunity to really meet the needs of the user and to reach out to non-users. I think small town librarians can get terribly burnt out because they have no backup or professional support nearby. For instance, in Southeast Alaska, three youth services librarians cover an area of hundreds of miles. When one librarian resigned we lost a crucial funding partner for author visits. If I were to quit or retire, our region would lose one of its advocates and grant writers. I have specialized in author visits and professional development

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

at the statewide level. Interestingly, in sixteen years, I've only seen an Anchorage or Fairbanks librarian write one statewide grant, which was for a storyteller tour last year. The larger libraries don't think about partnerships or collaboration or the rest of the state the way we rural libraries do. We must pool our resources, as we recently did with the statewide "Listen Alaska" on-line audio book project, or we wouldn't have databases, author tours, etc.  
Public library in AK

We're a very small community. I know each patron very well; this allows me to meet their needs on a more personal level. We all help each other out. Our library is the center of our community.  
Public library in AK

Many rural communities endure slow internet service. Due to the logistics of living in rural Alaska, DSL is still not available. Many villages in rural Alaska use dial-up. I currently am working on setting a satellite dish up for a faster connection.  
Public library in AK

Differences in a rural setting include a greater level of honesty among the patrons, greater difficulty in patrons getting to the library because of transportation problems, rural libraries rely more on internet than on print sources.  
School library in WY

In rural libraries we come to know our patrons by name and can recognize them on the street. Such familiarity allows us to make important judgment calls and to accepting some behaviors that would be unacceptable in other settings.  
Public library in AK

It depends on the complexion of the community. Ethnic culture and traditions all play key roles in our services. In the first rural community I lived in, the population was predominantly native. Our circulation revolved around videos and children's books for our summer reading program. The library was not used very much by adults in the community. We also tried to purchase as many books/videos/audio tapes that centered on the native culture of the area. The 2nd rural community has a wide variety of users, and we provide a variety of print and non-print resources: fiction, non-fiction, books on tape, video/DVD format materials and internet access. This library has also collaborated with the community college to provide a wide variety of academic materials to both students and patrons. This library is also used heavily in the summers by tourists wanting to check e-mail and people working in the community for the summer as a place to get out of the fowl weather and read magazines and books or listen to music and check email.  
School library in AK

The first difference is the variety of languages of people who come from countries without many local libraries: Laos, Tonga and American Samoa.  
Public and school library, HI

I worked in a city library for nearly 7 years as reference & readers advisory, then as outreach librarian. Of course, money is a big difference. Rural and small towns seem to appreciate their library more, overall. And, we do still know many people personally, or at least recognize them in Wal-Mart. We do not have the security issues, for the most part, and it's a good thing, because there is no one to deal with most of the problems but ourselves. (Today, for instance, I had to mop the men's restroom after a boy vomited in there...where is the janitor? Well, he's part time & does not work today. And, it's not in anyone else's job description! In the city library, I definitely would not have been doing that!) But, I digress. Many of the issues are the same – everyone wants the new best sellers, they want on the Internet for as long as they want, without waiting. Keeping up with technology – in knowledge and in practice – is very difficult in a small library. The biggest difference I guess is that in a small/rural library we learn to be jacks-of-all-trades. I have an excellent staff &

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

they have been with me for over 10 years. Together, we have learned to write policies, do marketing & public relations, write grants, set up exhibits, learn OCLC cataloging, plan programs, do web pages, etc. In a large library there are departments with staff to do all that, and the reference librarian does reference, the director manages, etc. The challenges are great, the monetary compensation small, but in terms of job satisfaction, it's terrific. Of course, there are days when the stress level is off the charts! There are not enough of us to go around, to provide all the services we would like to provide, and not enough money, either. And yet, we keep coming back day after day, year after year! I do wish we could support a "real" reference section, though! Public library in IL

In my experience, there are NO fundamental differences in the needs and wants of library patrons despite the size of the library. In my 30 years as a Librarian/Director, practice has remained basically the same no matter the size of the library. Finances will make a difference in the variety of service offered, staffing and size of facilities. Possibility the one difference I have observed is the visibility of the library staff in rural or small branch areas. We are much better known, and patrons ask us questions or recognize us wherever we go - grocery store, church or restaurants. Public library in IN

I have found that the folks who come to small city and rural libraries are more likely to perceive the library as a community gathering spot than the people who use "city" libraries. For many rural people, coming "to town" and to the library provides a major source of human interaction. To many of these folks, the library staff members become friends and confidants. The places I have been had active Friends groups that brought live performances to the libraries, supported the collections, programming, and the staff, etc. (Of course, some folks live in rural places so they don't have to deal with such things!) However, the information and recreation needs are as varied and broad in rural areas as in metro areas. And "problem patrons" are everywhere! As a staff member, I found the lack of professional proximity a real challenge (but, again, this was BEFORE e-mail, IM, bogs, etc.). The variety in each and every day was totally stimulating! Public library in IA

I haven't had experiences in other libraries, but I think the fundamental difference for us is that we are more dependent on the surrounding area than people with a town as their base. We also, in general, have a lower income base from which to draw. Larger libraries offer, and are expected to offer more current technology. We do our best, but funds and persons with the knowledge are less. Public library in IA

It used to be a bigger difference in things like education level, sophistication (especially in the area of technology), and lower expectations of service. However, as the population has changed, I am finding that there are fewer differences. Public library in IA

The rural customers are, in general, not as educated, so their library needs are less sophisticated. Public library in IA

My experience in other settings only includes experience as a library patron. I visit libraries everywhere I go. (This seems to be a compulsion of a lot of librarians!) I love small libraries and big libraries. My sense is that each library reflects the place and people where it is located, and that the best libraries of any size are pro-active in providing services, needs, and wants of their communities. "Build it and they will come." Libraries are changing with the times; reflecting technology, but also a sense of community interaction. In many very small towns the library is a vital connection to the world and the only place in town to come together. Public library in IA

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

I think stereotypes of librarianship are harder to change in small towns and rural areas. The population is related to each other. Everyone knows everyone and what is going on. It's a more personal exchange with librarian and patron. Money is tight, and some librarians and boards see no reason to fight for more library dollars. Public library in IA

The larger libraries I worked in were in a university town and a "white collar" suburb. Both communities could have been classified "rural" (surrounded by agriculture and pop. 12,562 and 16,193) but the expectations and attitudes of the patrons for what the library offered were different than the patrons we have in our community of 2,500. There was an expectation for more in-depth, intellectual type materials vs. the current best sellers. However, I think our community is changing. We have more people that commute to work in the Iowa City area and they are also looking for more than the current best sellers. Public library in IA

Well here they needs seem to be similar between those who live in town and those who live out of town. Most often, we serve adults who read for pleasure (mostly fiction) and the town's ten children. We do not get much circulation from kids. We are going to try to encourage more kids to read this summer as part of our summer reading. Public library in IA

To me the main difference is in the opportunities available. There are fewer art galleries, fewer theatrical performances, technology tends to be slower to change (thus many of my patrons don't have access to high speed Internet - it's not even a matter of money, it isn't an option). The library often serves as the cultural and information center of the community as there is no place else to go. Public library in IA

The rural patron comes to town once a week so they check out more items. They do not always know how to look up what they want and they come to the front desk and ask for help. We can't afford the amount of new technology items they can in a larger library. But we do get along. Public library in IA

There are different needs between the rural and city Libraries. As a rural area we are the hub for computer knowledge, socializing, children's programs, and Internet use. We do have CDs but they are not in high demand. We have not invested in play-a-longs as they have never been requested here. We also try to upgrade our DVD movie collection as we are one of few places where they are available to rent in a small town. We are lucky for a small town even though our budget is tight we are still opened 6 days a week. Public library in IA

Our library seems so much busier now then when I first started working here. We are the heart of Main Street, a meeting place, plus we have so many more programs offered. The patron computers have been a great addition and now we also provide wireless internet connection for anyone with a laptop. We still check out many books, but it seems like we are so much more today. Public library in IA

The only differences found are in the amount of time the libraries are open, the depth of their budgets, and the amount of staff required. All librarians have the same reports to complete, programming to do (size of attendees is different), scheduling, CE, computer problems, etc. Not much difference other than the ability to have highly trained tech people and staff members. Public library in IA

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

Many small towns have low income and lesser educated families moving in to take advantage of affordable housing. We notice today the effect on circulation of books because they are nonreaders. These people are also less likely to get their children involved in our Library programs. They do check out movies and the children use the internet to chat. We have helped rural patrons and town patrons with internet to connect to online college classes and are able to ILL books that help with their classes. We have 4 trucking families and they use the fax to send in log records so they do not have to go back into Omaha. A library in a rural area or a small town is often the center of communication. Public library in IA

We serve all ages but the dominant group is the older sector that reads a lot and the children that participate in our programs. For some reason we miss out on the middle school age kids. Then they come back when they get into high school and have to do more research papers. Public library in IA

I haven't worked as a librarian in other settings but I've lived in San Diego, St. Paul, Great Falls, MT and Waterloo, IA. I would say that my rural experience has been overwhelmingly with people who don't feel secure venturing out of their immediate area and aren't that curious about the rest of the world. They read mainly fiction. I have started 2 book discussion groups to open them up to other settings and situations. Often they don't enjoy something that's too far out of their current experience. Public library in IA

The only differences found are in the amount of time the libraries are open, the depth of their budgets, and the amount of staff required. All librarians have the same reports to complete, programming to do (size of attendees is different), scheduling, CE, computer problems, etc. I don't find much difference other than the ability to attract highly trained technicians and other staff. Public library in IA

Our library seems so much busier now than when I first started working here. We are the heart of Main Street, a meeting place, plus we have so many more programs offered. The patron computers have been a great addition and now we also provide wireless internet connection for anyone with a laptop. We still check out many books, but it seems like we are so much more today. Public library in IA

We know our patrons at a deeper level than city libraries and are more responsive to their material needs and wants. We don't have the kind of budget that cities have and we don't need the volume. Public library in KS

I believe our population is more conservative, homogenous and "blue-collar." It is very hard to get patrons in the rural area to attend any author programs, etc. Public library in Southeast KS

I haven't had experience in a city library. I primarily serve retirees. In the summer I serve lots of children due to our summer reading program. During the school year most of the elementary and middle school students check items out from their school library. They attend school in another small town. Public library in KS

Rural library patrons seem to need more flexibility in regards to return policies and fines due to the difficulty of being able to get into town (sick animals are much more important than overdue fines). Small towns and cities have very few significant differences, as most city patrons use branch libraries, which create a similar relationship to a small town library.

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

Public library in KS

We do not have a lot of library users, but those that do use the library are very faithful. Because of our size, we are limited in what we have in our collection on specific topics. As a result, we possibly rely more on Interlibrary Loans to fill our patrons' needs. I am probably more cautious about ordering controversial materials than I would be in an urban library. Our budgets are more limited in rural libraries, so our services and collections are more limited. We do not have as many computers in our library as we would like to. They are always in demand. Public library in KS

One thing I've noticed is that in a city the population is a little more advanced technologically. In a small or rural town the population is predominately senior and they have different needs and preferences and have a hard time using new technologies. There may be a bigger need for basic email, computer and internet type classes. There are also fewer teens involved in the small town library. However, if you are rural but also the biggest town around you have a wider patron base that needs to be considered. Another thing I noticed in the city library is the education level of the average patron was higher which affects the type of materials selected. In a small library you have fewer workers and they have to do everything. We don't have one person in circ, one in reference, an IT person, an accountant. We have to be all things to all people. This can be very stressful and overwhelming at times. Then again I have noticed fewer irate patrons in a small library than in the bigger ones. In city libraries the patrons believe their time is more valuable and they want answers quickly and they want issues resolved quickly. In a small town you will most likely be seeing your patrons on a daily basis outside of the library and this may affect how patrons treat you and others. Obviously the budget is bigger in a city library and so they can have computer labs and more specialized staff. They also have more "real" librarians, those with an MLS, whereas a small library may not even have a Director who is a librarian. Public library in KS

City Librarianship was faster paced, less friendly. Hurry, hurry, hurry. In the city many of the chronically mentally ill would come in and become abusive. Gangs would stake claims. Drugs would be used in the bathrooms. Working in the rural small town library, the community feels more of an ownership with the library. The staff knows the patrons and the children's families, many times on a personal level. The community members support the library. Community members who have mental problems are known to the staff and know who to contact if there are problems. City libraries have more resources, access to the newest books, electronic resources, community training. But they may have longer waiting times for popular titles. Rural libraries may not have the trained staff or the funds to train staff. Rural libraries have a difficult time recruiting MLS staff. City Librarianship is compartmented. Each person has a distinct single type of position and job, while rural librarians do everything. Variety is one of the pluses of working in a rural library. Academic library in MT

You know your population more as individuals. Security tends to be looser because of lower crime than that suffered by larger communities. Staff and board dynamics can be more difficult because everyone can be related to everyone else, and boards often micromanage us because we have fewer employees. Rural areas are usually more conservative than urban libraries. Our collection does not reflect the vast variation in tastes that a larger library would have: our adult fiction collection is composed almost exclusively of romance and mystery novels). There are often few organizations and agencies with which to partner. Job descriptions tend to blur. Public library in OH

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

The population is usually of a lower socioeconomic level and lower education level, and the library serves everyone regardless of age or socioeconomic status. A rural library is often its town's only resource. The rural community looks to the library for everything! To meet a community's needs, rural libraries go "over and above." The rural librarians will "do" more for the patron than larger suburban libraries in which patrons are expected to be more "self sufficient." Public library in PA

The library users were better educated in the urban settings. That does not mean that we do not have highly educated people here. There are just fewer of them. We are so isolated that many young people who are ambitious for a better life leave. That is sad, but it happens. Not only do I love the lack of traffic here, but I like helping people who are not used to using a library. It feels really good when we can persuade them that the library has something to offer that they actually want. I guess our service is pretty basic. I am the only person with an MLS. There is one other person on staff with a BA. Everyone else has a high school diploma or in some cases a couple of years of college. I get called on for reference some, but some of our diploma folks do quite well with reference questions. At the branch library the two staff members have HS diplomas. I do not see that changing in the near future. Public Library in SC

We don't have to worry about large number of homeless patrons, security or theft issues, nor do we have to have sign-up lists for our computers, for example. Public library in WY

The population here is much less ethnically diverse than it was in the suburban library in which I previously worked. But needs are remarkably similar. Kids need a place to go when they have no other resources. People need computers to find and apply for jobs and to check e-mail. And people of all ages come in for books, movies, CDs, or just for a place to hang out and visit. During the school year, we also serve as the local school's library, and so classes visit to check out books and conduct research. Public/school library in WY

In our small town (2,000) the school library is a major center of activity. Our collection is far larger than that offered by the town's small public library. Many of our students' stay-at-home moms volunteer and we enjoy fabulous support for book fairs and family reading nights. The school is such an important part of the community when there is little else. School library in WY

A) SIZE:

I think the fundamental, overall difference, between my current, tiny library & the other two libraries I worked in, is size.

B) INTIMACY:

In such a small environment, the librarian/customer relationship is almost intimate. I don't need statistics to tell me what to buy and what not to buy, because I know who likes what and what does not go over here. I personally know all the customers (they are my friends and neighbors). I even get to know the tourists (after seeing the same strange face several times for a week). While I was not involved with selection in my former jobs, I did wait on customers at both jobs. I don't remember seeing any of the customers often enough to realize they came in regularly, let alone get to know any of them.

C) CUSTOMERS:

Our tiny population is just as varied as that of a big city (though the total number of individual differences is much smaller because of the fewer people). However, the differences are very

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

much more noticeable in the small setting and appear more polarized. I feel like I purchase for several different populations. There are the year-round residents (mostly blue collar tastes) the “summer people” (mostly white-collar tastes) and a large group of foreign plant worker who hardly speak English.

D) BUDGET:

Because of our small population the cost per customer is high and our budget tiny. A book may only circulate a few times, so we save money by buying paperbacks. Of course, with very popular items (ex. Harry Potter books) we buy the hard bound as soon as possible.

It is a balancing act: the broad differences between blue-collar tastes and white collar tastes; and individual tastes of the 1 person who is into this, the 3 people into that, the 2 people into the other thing, etc., etc. This balancing is the same for a big library, but in a city, many customers will use a given item, not just 1 or 3. Less bang for the buck and we have fewer bucks to just as far.

We just can't afford everything and depend heavily on Interlibrary Loan to fill in the gaps. With non-fiction I tend to buy a broad, popularly written work on a subject (to get the customer started) then borrow the more specific works.

To save replacement costs, we are more likely to put up with (keep) some types of items that libraries normally replace. For example: why discard a good condition basic book on, say, palmistry, just because it hasn't circulated in 5 years, when the currently published replacement just covers the same ground.

We buy much of our materials from non-library sources such as Amazon rather than from traditional library vendors where our small purchases aren't enough to qualify for any discount. We use traditional library vendors for group/program purchases such as magazines (much easier to write one check than a dozen) and the leased book program (provides the best advance information I've heard of for what is coming “hot off the press”) etc. However, most other purchases come from non-library sources. If I see a book for the library in a library vendor's catalog, I buy it from Amazon.

E) ISOLATION:

You really notice the isolation when you get an overdue e-mail or fax for an Interlibrary Loan book that has not even arrived yet. The bar and the library are the only source of entertainment in a tiny, isolated town.

F) OTHER DIFFERENCES:

a) Reference:

My only prior experience with reference was in government documents at the university library. Being a specialized department, most customers that reached us had a reasonable handle on the sort of material they wanted. Here, however, questions are rather nebulous. Personally knowing the customers really helps! We also depend a lot on the Internet for reference type material, rather than spend the money to maintain a reference collection (ex. Encyclopedia).

I don't mean to imply that our patrons don't know what they want or that I am a whiz at reference because I know them personally. Many know exactly what they want; some even come primed with full bibliographic information. But there is also a lot of “What do I want to read?” and personally knowing their tastes does improve my ability to help them.

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

b) Movies:

When we travel on vacation, I look at the libraries. All but one that I have visited had only a few shelves of movies. Movies form about a sixth of our collection and account for 3 quarters of our circulation. The popularity of movies is, at least partly, due to isolation, as going to see a first run movie (nearest theater is Juneau) is a major expedition.

c) Vertical File:

The vertical file at the big city library I worked at was extensive (about 20 four drawer file cabinets) actively maintained, and much used. In the 10 years I've been librarian here, only the half drawer of local material has ever been used, and only by tourists.

d) Usage

Because of our small population, individual items see less circulation. If one person takes out a book, I'm pleased I bought it. Three circulations is Popular; 4 is Very Popular, and 5 is a Runaway Bestseller. At my former libraries, however, a dozen circulations would be a loser. Movies are more popular: anything with fewer than 6 circulations is a flop.

e) Customers:

We are a commercial fishing village and our population more than doubles during the fishing season (fishermen, their crews, their families, and plant workers). So we are used to serving "nonresidents" and they are a significant portion of the library's customers. If the fish plant did not exist, the town (& library) would not exist. So we do not treat the nonresidents any different than our local customers (some of who live outside the city limits and are technically nonresidents). My personal experience as a nonresident (while caring for my mother during an extended illness) was a pain. They had many requirements, including that I present a piece of mail addressed to me in the area. Since I did not live there I didn't have any mail (my husband & I communicated by phone). So I had my husband mail me an envelope to meet the requirement. Public library in AK

Rural and Small town libraries are more like Special Libraries in that the librarian knows the population (mostly) and their materials use. Library association in IA

**What are the feelings about rural library staff salaries? Should they be higher?**

I have no complaints. But salaries vary so much from town to town in Alaska. There are a number of volunteer librarians in our state and I know everyone works off the clock all the time. Everywhere I look I see more work than I see paid staff. We all need more help. Lack of qualified staff seems to be a larger issue than inadequate pay. A growing population, increased circulation, more services and internet maintenance have increased our workload tremendously throughout the state. We are launching teen programs around the state but we have no teen librarians, just more programs to plan, administer and fund. What we could do with more people.....incredible. Public library in AK

Salaries are relatively good...I work in a school district whose educators' pay and benefits are respectable. School library in Fremont, WY

I'm not so much into getting paid more per hour, but rather getting paid for the hours I work. I'm paid for only 15 hours a week (10 open hours + 5 for behind the scenes work) but I work nearly full time. The 15 hours formula is based on the hours of the previous librarian (but she had a 10-hour a week helper and a City employee did the janitorial work). I have no helper and I'm the janitor. Furthermore, computers & the Internet, E-Rate, the increased requirements & reporting for the State grant we depend on, are just three of the larger tasks

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

that did not exist during the tenure of my predecessor. Public library in AK

Yes, of course. Women lag behind men in Wyoming. Our county employees earn less than city employees who earn less than university employees who earn less than Jonah Field workers (that's oil gasification). Public library in WY

Yes, they should be higher. I have been the director of a two-county, 11 member library system in north central Pennsylvania for 27 years and I make less than \$42,000. There are two other local library directors who have their MLS and make \$36,400 (30 years experience) and \$35,600. The other local library directors' salaries range from \$7.50/hr. to 13.90/hr. Only two libraries offer health insurance. Public library in North Central PA

I am not really worried about my pay; I don't even turn in a time card most of the time. It would be nice to have some extra money to pay for some more of my time, but the money is spent mostly on heating our library and meeting the state's requirements as far as how much money is spent on library materials and internet. It is more important to me to spend our state grant, our main source of income, on keeping our library going since it is such an important part of Lake Minchumina. Public library in AK

Many communities in rural Alaska are now near poverty. Due to lack of students, some schools in rural villages are on the verge of closing and a few already have. Living expenses in rural Alaska have steadily increased, partly due to the logistics of transportation via airplane or by barging items to the area. Currently, where I live a gallon of milk is now \$7.65, gas is \$4.22 a gallon and heating oil for homes is \$3.82 a gallon. Electricity costs have also steadily increased because the local plant has to use fuel to operate the generators. At this point I am just grateful to have a job. Public library in AK

I feel that salaries and raises should be increased as the cost of living increases. Here prices have gone up so fast and so frequently that my purchasing power is much less that it was a year ago, even with annual wages increased factored in. Public library in AK

I believe my salary and benefits are very good. But I came to Alaska in the 1970's when teachers were being sought out and the oil pipeline was booming. Because I came during "Tier 1" I have excellent benefits; I'm also nearing retirement so I'm at the top of the scale. New school librarians have much poorer salaries and benefits. I also believe the paraprofessionals in our libraries are under-paid. School library in AK

They are very low, especially considering the cost of living in Hawaii. My library technician has been working here for about 20 years and makes almost as much as I do as branch manager. We take home about \$2,000 a month. Public and school library in HI

Of course, salaries should be higher – but there is no money. I would rather have a lower salary, and have a job that I truly enjoy. I could have fewer staff, but then I would have to work many of the nights and Saturdays. It's a trade off. But, I will say that higher salaries for small/rural librarians must go hand in hand with education and training. This is no longer a job that someone can step into just because they like to read! Overall, I think starting salaries for librarians have improved to keep pace with others in the public education arena, except in small/rural libraries. We have a newly-minted MLS librarian working here for the love of the job – at half the salary she could make at a large library, and with no benefits. Public library in IL

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

Of course most salaries should be higher, especially in the smaller units of service. However, Indiana library salaries are often limited by the amount of revenue that can be raised. Local governmental units have statutory freezes and guide lines. Libraries are hit twice: the amount of money to be raised (levy) and the tax rate charged are frozen at 1973 (rates) & 1978 (levies) levels. Until the last two years the yearly increase was 5%. The legislature is pushing that down to 3% as fast as they can. Public library in IN

Like any other job, education, experience, & job performance should play into the equation. It is tough w/ libraries, because they are not a money-making business & always on the budget cut-list. I think most directors and library staff work for much less than they might make in other positions, but some of those positions, none of us would fill. Most of us also enjoy what we are doing as well as providing a service to our communities. Public library in IA

I received a raise last fall, after pointing out that the new minimum wage laws would probably be passed. I enjoy the amount I get (having been out of the workforce to raise a family). But I know even slightly large libraries have higher salaries and more staff. Those things would both be great! But where would the increased funding come from? Public library in IA

Our salaries are too low, especially since minimum wage went up. Many of the smaller libraries have small budgets so the board feels they cannot offer high pay. Should they be higher? Yes. Public library in IA

It's appalling to me that teenagers who work fast food make more than most librarians in our area (they're given more hours to do their jobs and a higher wage!). When I first started at my library, I was hired to be full time with benefits, but the salary was low enough that I could not afford to live in the town where I worked! As a college-educated, skilled person with experience in the field, I think that's truly sad. We fought for higher wages and won a spot on the City salary matrix. You could argue that we're not where we should be yet, but great strides have been made and we are now one of the higher paid libraries in our area. To give you an idea, we're doing well enough that the minimum wage increase did not affect anyone on our staff. Most small libraries can't say that, from what I've heard. Public library in IA

The salaries in rural areas definitely lagged behind others in my experience. We used to joke that it was worth \$4,000 to have the clean air and clear skies. Public library in IA

In general, rural salaries are pathetic. Because of the lowered expectations of service, experience and education don't seem to be valued. Even those with higher education aren't compensated. Public library in IA

Salaries could always be higher. I have an MLS, 20+ years working in libraries (13 as director) and I make almost as much as a first year teacher with no experience. However, in comparison to other director's salaries in C size libraries, my salary is probably in the top 5-10% pay range. I'm at that range because after doing all the charts and comparisons when doing a budget proposal, I was able to keep inching our salaries up. Now that I'm toward the "top" (so to speak), what do I use for comparison? Do I use salaries in the next largest community? That won't fly here. Public librarians are the lowest of the low public servants (salary wise) and I feel are paid according to the value placed on the position. But who sets this value? The community? The public at large? I could go on and on. Public library in IA

Patrons and politicians often don't realize that public librarians are educated people with college degrees and special training. In small towns librarians receive much less. In many

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

cases librarians receive minimum wage and are working the smallest number of hours possible. Yes, I think salaries should be higher for the work and expertise of librarians. Public library in IA

I think we are under paid. Most communities do not pay enough to show how much we are valued or maybe they do. I think that the board members are barely (if at all) aware of the work required by the directors. I would not this for 7.50 an hour if I had a MLS. Being paid so little gives the impression how much the community, board, and city council do not value us. We can cut the community a bit of slack because the board and city council may not have educated them enough. But they barely know enough to educate others. Yes, I think she should be higher. Most are pay significantly less then the clerks or even in my case assistant clerk that works a few days a month. Public library in IA

They should absolutely be higher. For all the work we do, it would be hard to find anyone as dedicated as my staff. Unfortunately, they are only part-time and the wages are not what they should be. We put in many hours at home without pay preparing for story times or working on other projects that involve the library. Public library in IA

Mine is better than most, but still it's pathetic with the years of experience and education. They should absolutely be higher. For the amount of time devoted to their libraries and education received, they usually receive a pittance. In most places, it's supplemental income. Public library in IA

I feel that we are vastly underpaid. Our city clerk is paid nearly twice as much and works fewer hours and has only been at the job for 6-7 years compared to my 22 years. Public library in IA

The salaries are bad because all the employment opportunities are lower then they would be in a city. Public library in IA

If you compare the salaries of other "Heads of Departments" and/or city employees with what librarians make there is a huge discrepancy. The training and education we have compared to someone who leans on a shovel is not even close. Sorry to have spouted off. Librarians are overworked and under-paid. Public library in IA

I feel the salaries should be higher. Other City departments start at higher wages, but the community does not realize all of the different tasks that we perform at the library. I would also like to see the city willing to pay for longer staff hours so we can have more than one person on duty at all times. We also would benefit from a fund to cover expenses for staff meetings and computer training. Public library in IA

Salaries are low. Fast food starts at 8.00 and I just read in the paper the starting wage at a grocery store was 10.50. I have worked at my library job for almost 20 years and this July will be making 10.60 hour. But I live close by and so I trudge on. Public library in IA

We are not paid for our experience or qualifications, but in a small town/rural area we have to have the love of helping people and making a difference...not the money. I also work at the public school library to supplement income and am certified by the state. Public library in IA

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

My salary is very low. The two other employees make minimum wage. When the January raise goes into effect, we will all make the same. I will not be happy with that. However, small libraries do not have the budget to use on increasing salaries nor does the town council have the money to increase library funding. Public library in IA

Librarians are very poorly paid, which computes to a lack of respect by the public. Generally they think we only sit and read and check books in and out. Especially in rural libraries with hardly any staff, we must know and do everything! I am better paid than many small town librarians I talk to. I have a B.S. degree but the previous librarian with 15 years' experience didn't and was getting the same amount I am. Public library in IA

Salaries vary greatly as do qualifications for the job. I feel I am paid adequately for the position and community. But I know colleagues who are paid a fraction of what I'm paid and for very few hours a week. Money is tight in any governmental agency at this time. I am not aware of any government that is looking for ways to spend all they money they have. They are all looking at what is essential and what is a priority. Public library in IA

Absolutely! Librarian pay in this area is near poverty level. Public library in KS

Though I don't supervise a large staff, I do have to be open almost as many hours as urban libraries, and our staff must be cross-trained in all areas. I also have to do all the payroll, taxes, scheduling of staff, basic IT troubleshooting (since our systems IT person lives 1 ½ hours away), all my own secretarial duties, bookkeeping, collection development, help on the desk as needed, public relations. I organize and help with the Foundation's monthly book sale, write a weekly column for the local newspaper, serve on various city committees - including Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Chair for the Public Relations Committee for the city, plus a member of our Leadership Coalition. As of last July, my salary is \$38,000/year. I feel this does not compensate me for all I am required to know, learn and perform, especially with the qualification of a MLS. The neighboring city's director makes \$53,000/year for a smaller town and the library is only open 4 days a week. Public library in Southeast KS

I feel like our salaries should be higher. Our "city fathers" don't realize all of the things that we do and provide for our patrons. Many don't even use the library. They think that all we do is sit around and read all day. Our salaries are not even comparable with our city workers. Public library in KS

Rural and small town librarians are more unpaid than are the "city" librarians. They are also usually paid less than are the other community department heads. After all it is *just* women's work. Library association in IA

It would be nice to have about 5% higher starting salaries, but the tax base won't support it. Our starting salary for a director is \$30,000-\$34,000. Given that the directorship is the only position which requires a college degree (MLS preferred), the pay is very acceptable. On the other hand, directors in rural/small towns end up doing more aspects of library work than libraries with greater departmentalization. Public library in KS

Our salaries are very low for what the library standards recommend. I am the director of the library where I work. I have an MLS degree, and when I started this position I was making less than what I was making as a paraprofessional in the local school district. I am currently at \$9.75 an hour which is still very low. I am working at three-quarter time and have no

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

benefits except sick leave and vacation time. This is not uncommon in our area. Until last year, several of my staff members were receiving minimum wage. I worked very hard to get their pay raised, and the pay now ranges from \$6.00 to \$7.50 per hour. We will be behind again when the minimum wage goes through—at least in the next several years. I'm not sure how this and other rural libraries will absorb these costs. Other rural libraries in this area offer much the same salaries. Most of these librarians should be making better pay. In a small library, the director is usually responsible for all aspects of library management and often the clerical work besides. We are also responsible for making sure the building is maintained and that the computers are up and going, and for acquisitions and for library programming and for staff development (if you are lucky enough to have a staff), etc., etc. I don't know of many other jobs that require you to do all these things. I am leaving this position for a school position, mainly due to better hours, better pay, etc. The Library Board is hoping to replace me with another MLS librarian, but I think that might be extremely difficult unless they raise the pay. Public library in KS

I absolutely believe the salaries for any staff in a library should be higher but especially those who hold an MLS. I also believe EVERY library should have a director with a Master's. I don't think it is fair to the community to create a have and have-not situation because of population size. I think the base 40,000 salary is a good place to start even though I think it should be higher than that but I also think there should be more continuing education requirements for the holders of an MLS. I can't think of any other profession that doesn't have some sort of required continuing education and the library field is WAY behind on this one. We also need to educate the public about what we do every day. I think people are under the impression that anyone can be a librarian, that it doesn't require a lot of work. Since we get paid based on what the population and city believes we are worth we need to tell them what exactly it is that we do and why we deserve to be paid more. This is an area that we need to focus on in my opinion. We need to get ourselves out there, in the media and talk about what we do and why we do it. Public library in KS

Our salaries are not equal to what I had when I worked in an urban library. I took a \$15,000 cut in pay. I am also paid more than any of the other library directors in the county. But none of them have MLS's either. I am sure that MLS librarians leave Montana to for higher salaries elsewhere after they gain experience on their resumes. Of course salaries should be higher for all levels of library staff. I know of libraries that pay no benefits, and give only minimum wages. These are low economic areas, where the county, city chose not to pay more. They spend their funds on other services. Academic library in MT

Rural library salaries are pathetic. Ohio libraries are among the best funded in the nation, but rural librarians are still fighting for pay equity. Equitable salaries would take a lion's share of the budget. Our community also assumes that librarians don't deserve high salaries, though we hope that certification might raise the status of library workers. Boards are unlikely to pay; they assume that because you chose to live in a rural area you shouldn't expect a big salary. I also feel that the library community overlooks rural libraries. We can't afford ALA or even state conferences. Without representation and numbers, we are often overlooked. We don't have time to travel to conferences, complete surveys or serve on committees. Also, many rural libraries are run by people who are not MLS librarians. Library statistics often overlook this fact. *Library Journal* may boast that the beginning library salary is now \$40,000, but I have worked for 22 years in a rural library and had to fight for my last raise which put me at \$26,000 a year. I think much of it depends on the individual boards. Do they see the staff as a vital part of the library with unique skills and training or do they see the staff as easily replaceable clerical workers? Many of the smaller libraries are run by those who have

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

spouses who work and receive insurance elsewhere. Since they are not relying on their library salary to support them, they accept lower wages not thinking of the disservice it does to those who are trying to live on a librarian's salary. Public library in OH

In PA "anyone" can call themselves a "librarian." Small, rural libraries are often directed by paraprofessionals who have either system certification or library assistant certification (depending upon population size of their service area). I think that the state would lend credibility to the profession if it set salary ranges for each certification level, including professional. Right now the "excuse" for not paying a living wage (or offering benefits) is that our region can't afford it. Yet community professionals who are on the library board don't make less as attorneys, teachers and nurses because they live in Southwest Pennsylvania. Only librarians are forced to take smaller salaries. Librarians are still seen as "volunteers" for the "greater good": because we love our jobs we should be willing to make less. Public library in PA

Interestingly enough, some of the younger librarians in small counties in this state make more than I do. I chose to be here and took a 30% pay cut in 2000 when I came here. I was miserable in my higher paying job in another state. I know of at least one other rural SC library director who did exactly the same thing for much the same reasons. My current salary after 32 years in my field (MLS 1975) is just below the level that *Library Journal* announced this year as the average starting salary (\$40,000. I make \$39,007.) Yes, I think that is a problem, but I am not sure what the solution may be as the rural South is not likely to change radically any time soon. Hiring pay for a new library assistant here with a HS diploma would be \$7.00 per hour. Public library in SC

Our salaries are below teaching wages, but the job and pay are better than other jobs in the area. Public library in WY

My understanding is that our county has had some of the lowest salaries in the state. I personally took a 25% pay cut to work here; prior to my current position I held a similar mid-level management position at a Midwestern university. Due to the efforts of our director we received substantial pay increases, but I'm still nowhere near what I was making in my previous position. The cost of living is lower in but housing prices are almost identical. We are also aware that the university down the street offers much higher salaries. The library loses a steady stream of staff to this school. Public library in WY

The most poorly paid people in our system are, of course, the lowest tier of employees—the pages and other hourly workers. I would like to see their pay be higher and closer to a living wage. While my salary is not large, it has been enough to meet my needs (though it's worth pointing out that I'm a single person with no children and without overwhelming student loan debts). Actually, I make only a few thousand dollars less per year than the salaries I've seen advertised for starting library jobs in major urban areas. Also, it's worth noting that not all rural libraries are created equal. Many Wyoming libraries in good financial shape, due in part to the state being prosperous at the moment and in part because of the statewide library network, which allows libraries that would otherwise have few resources to have access to databases and other libraries' collections. In my tiny town (pop. 351, although we probably serve another 200-300 who live outside the official town limits), we have a library that's open 44 hours a week and employs 2 people full-time. Contrast that with, say, the library in Gardiner, MT, a town three times our size whose library is open only 11 hours a week. I feel a bit awkward answering questions about "rural libraries," because they aren't a cohesive unit. Public/school library in WY

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

Salaries for school librarians are just the same as for teachers. I only have an endorsement, not an MLS, so I am categorized with teachers with similar credits. Salaries have gone up and down with the wealth of the state. Right now we are on an upswing with the energy boom. In years past we had our salaries frozen. A school library in Wyoming

**Have you heard about rural libraries that have raised their salaries?**

I think our city might be the best model of bringing a rural library up to modern standards. Endless grant writing, building local support and slowly raising awareness of what a professional library staff can provide for a community brought salaries up. Our own city management just finished a \$60,000 salary survey, which was quite well done, and we are awaiting the results. Will my job finally be commensurate with the adult librarian? We'll see!  
Public library in AK

Many small libraries approach their board and city councils. They do what they can and adjust their budgets. I have had 3 increases over the 30 years. If you show your city council what you have accomplished for the betterment of the community...they are pretty responsive. I am not paid much, but I do love what I do!  
Public library in IA

Raising salaries in public libraries is always a difficulty, especially in librarianship. We are notoriously under-paid. The will of the community dictates public servants' pay. Educating the public is where advocacy might help, especially when the libraries assist families in rearing the youth. Fundraisers that reflect the positive WY

Since we are part of a statewide system which is an arm of the Department of Education we are not able to affect a raise for rural work. Public and school library, HI

I have no first-hand knowledge of any rural libraries in my area that have substantially raised salaries. The minimum wage law pretty much prevents substantial raises in the mid-level or top-level salary tiers. Once you have found the money to meet the minimum wage requirements, there is nothing left for anyone else. It is sad but true. (Illinois minimum wage goes up to \$7.50 /hour July 1.) At this library, we have joined the local Community Foundation hoping to encourage donations to "endow" the director's chair to ensure high quality service will continue into the future. Our board understands the importance of replacing me with MLS when I retire, (and, in fact, I have recruited my own replacement) but many small libraries don't see the value, the need, or a way to provide the salary necessary to attract a professional librarian. Then, too, the odds that qualified MLS librarians will be living within commuting distance of all the small/rural libraries (or even medium-sized) in the country are pretty small. Public library in IL

The only rural libraries that have raised salaries have very penny-pinching boards and, with a change in the complexion of the library board, staff were valued more and given raises.  
Public library in IN

Like any other job, education, experience, & job performance should play into the equation. It is tough w/ libraries, because they are not a money-making business & always on the

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

budget cut-list. I think most directors and library staff work for much less than they might make in other positions, but some of those positions, none of us would fill. Most of us also enjoy what we are doing as well as providing a service to our communities. Public library in IA

I received a raise last fall, after pointing out that the new minimum wage laws would probably be passed. I enjoy the amount I get (having been out of the workforce to raise a family). But I know even slightly large libraries have higher salaries and more staff. Those things would both be great! But where would the increased funding come from? Public library in IA

Our salaries are too low, especially since minimum wage went up. Many of the smaller libraries have small budgets so the board feels they cannot offer high pay. Should they be higher? Yes. Public library in IA

It's appalling to me that teenagers who work fast food make more than most librarians in our area (they're given more hours to do their jobs and a higher wage!). When I first started at my library, I was hired to be full time with benefits, but the salary was low enough that I could not afford to live in the town where I worked! As a college-educated, skilled person with experience in the field, I think that's truly sad. We fought for higher wages and won a spot on the city salary matrix. You could argue that we're not where we should be yet, but great strides have been made and we are now one of the higher paid libraries in our area. To give you an idea, we're doing well enough that the minimum wage increase did not affect anyone on our staff. Most small libraries can't say that, from what I've heard. Public library in IA

The salaries in rural areas definitely lagged behind others in my experience. We used to joke that it was worth \$4,000 to have the clean air and clear skies. Public library in IA

Patrons and politicians often don't realize that public librarians are educated people with college degrees and special training. In small towns librarians receive much less. In many cases librarians receive minimum wage and are working the smallest number of hours possible. Yes, I think salaries should be higher for the work and expertise of librarians. Public library in IA

I think we are under paid. Most communities do not pay enough to show how much we are valued or maybe they do. I think that the board members are barely (if at all) aware of the work required by the directors. I would not this for 7.50 an hour if I had a MLS. Being paid so little gives the impression how much the community, board, and city council do not value us. We can cut the community a bit of slack because the board and city council may not have educated them enough. But they barely know enough to educate others. Yes, I think she should be higher. Most are pay significantly less then the clerks or even in my case assistant clerk that works a few days a month. Public library in IA

They should absolutely be higher. For all the work we do, it would be hard to find anyone as dedicated as my staff. Unfortunately, they are only part-time and the wages are not what they should be. We put in many hours at home without pay preparing for story times or working on other projects that involve the library. Public library in IA

Mine is better than most, but still it's pathetic with the years of experience and education. They should absolutely be higher. For the amount of time devoted to their libraries and education received, they usually receive a pittance. In most places, it's supplemental income. Public library in IA

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

I feel that we are vastly underpaid. Our city clerk is paid nearly twice as much and works fewer hours and has only been at the job for 6-7 years compared to my 22 years. Public library in IA

The salaries are bad because all the employment opportunities are lower then they would be in a city. Public library in IA

If you compare the salaries of other "Heads of Departments" and/or city employees with what librarians make there is a huge discrepancy. The training and education we have compared to someone who leans on a shovel is not even close. Sorry to have spouted off. Librarians are over worked and under paid. Public library in IA

I feel the salaries should be higher. Other city departments start at higher wages, but the community does not realize all of the different tasks that we perform at the library. I would also like to see the city willing to pay for longer staff hours so we can have more than one person on duty at all times. We also would benefit from a fund to cover expenses for staff meetings and computer training. Public library in IA

Salaries are low. Fast food starts at 8.00 and I just read in the paper the starting wage at a grocery store was 10.50. I have worked at my library job for almost 20 years and this July will be making 10.60 hour. But I live close by and so I trudge on. Public library in IA

For all the work we do, it would be hard to find anyone as dedicated as my staff. Unfortunately, they are only part-time and the wages are not what they should be. We put in many hours at home without pay preparing for story times or working on other projects that involve the library. Public library in IA

We are not paid for our experience or qualifications, but in a small town/rural area we have to have the love of helping people and making a difference...not the money. I also work at the public school library to supplement income and am certified by the state. Public library in IA

Many small libraries approach their board and city councils. They do what they can and adjust their budgets. I have had 3 increases over the 30 years. If you show your city council what you have accomplished for the betterment of the community...they are pretty responsive. I am not paid much, but I do love what I do! Public library in IA

My salary is very low. The two other employees make minimum wage. When the January raise goes into effect, we will all make the same. I will not be happy with that. However, small libraries do not have the budget to use on increasing salaries nor does the town council have the money to increase library funding. Public library in IA

Librarians are very poorly paid, which computes to a lack of respect by the public. Generally they think we only sit and read and check books in and out. Especially in rural libraries with hardly any staff, we must know and do everything! I am better paid than many small town librarians I talk to. I have a B.S. degree but the previous librarian with 15 years' experience didn't and was getting the same amount I am. Public library in IA

Salaries vary greatly as do qualifications for the job. I feel I am paid adequately for the position and community. But I know colleagues who are paid a fraction of what I'm paid and for very few hours a week. Money is tight in any governmental agency at this time. I am not aware of any government that is looking for ways to spend all they money they have. They are all looking at what is essential and what is a priority. Public library in IA

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

We have raised salaries here first by hiring and retaining excellent people and doing a wonderful job serving the community, so that people really perceive the library as valuable. Then we've approached it by comparing our salaries to comparable positions in education and city and county government. We've made great strides, although it's difficult when salaries are low in the area and especially when other rural KS

My co-director and I got a \$.50/hr. raise this year to \$10.00/hr. by cutting our education expenses for this next year. Our Regional Library System is very good about providing us continuing education at no cost, just mileage and sometimes the cost of food. Public library in KS

I have a great working partnership with the city leaders but the board is the one that sets my salary. I have been in this job since last July and the former director had them convinced that you should never spend a dime. Public library in Southeast KS

A librarian must educate the library board and patrons in a rural area in order to get salary raises. I live in a farming community and wages are low. It is hard for some people to see that the librarian should be paid a decent wage and receive benefits. I am thankful that my board has been proactive in giving raises and benefits. Public library in KS

I know of a rural library in western Kansas that offers much better pay. The library in Syracuse is a county-wide library so their situation is different, but a friend of mine who had only two years of junior college courses was making much better pay than I was several years ago. I don't know how they managed to do this. The budgets in rural libraries are very limited. I don't how they will be KS

I just garnered a wage increase for myself and my staff. What I did was took what city employees are making and used the KLA guidelines for % increase based on education and said this is what we need to be getting. I also presented them with the statement from the ALA-APA about the 40,000 minimum and they thought it was fair. We have asked very little in increases from the city and we thought we should be more aggressive in what we ask for. We are a valid part of the community and we need to be funded like we are. Fortunately I have a board that is in agreement with me so we didn't have any problems with the increase in salaries. We're still waiting to see what the city does and if they protest. We also have a board member whose husband is on the city council and so is familiar with what other departments ask for and are getting and spending and not spending, so we have a good history with the city by not being one of the departments who are way under budget and still asking for more. I guess our theory is if KS

None of the local libraries in this county have raised salaries. Other larger city libraries in the state may have, but then they do not fall under my definition of a rural library (a population of 10,000 or less). In my situation as part of a College, I and my staff do get cost of living raises and for a while step raises. One library beside mine may give cost of living raises. Academic library in MT

Our board does tend to try to give us cost of living but with the funding freeze of the past seven years, we were only paid 90% of the cost of living. We received an excellent raise last year but it was a tough fight. I believe we won because we expect Ohio's funding situation to improve with the new state budget. We also overestimated last year's expenses. Because we survived, the board felt we had enough money to warrant a larger raise this year. Public

ALA-APA Rural Library Staff Salary Survey  
June 2007

library in OH

In my district there are some rural libraries that have gotten the hourly rate increased as high as \$7.50. It took a strong board president, a library director willing to fight for her staff and their value and the board's desire to retain good staff. Most small, rural libraries have "revolving doors." We can attract great, talented people, but we can't keep them due to pitiful hourly wages and lack of benefits. There is too much competition. Wal-Marts and Walgreens are everywhere here in Southwest Pennsylvania and they pay more by the hour. I still have a couple of library boards that "refuse" to increase hourly wages. The salary level of professional level librarians is also well-below average. And many still do not have health care or retirement. Public library in PA

A good number of South Carolina counties have included the public library in a salary study and have raised library pay as a result. We were included in such a study in our county four years ago. Unfortunately, our appropriation has never been raised to allow us to implement the results of the study. My own salary would not go up much even if this plan was implemented, but some of our staff members would enjoy large raises. Public library in SC

Our wages have been rising since we have been more closely aligned with other county jobs requiring similar education and skills. If the community places a higher value on their public library, the library can raise more funds, which will result in better salaries for the workers and a better collection for the public. Public library in Torrington, WY

Our director made a concerted effort to examine comparable positions within the county, our governmental unit, and in the other major public libraries across the state. The county was reexamining its salaries and she made sure that they reconsidered ours as a part of this effort. Public library in WY

I know that our director has been lobbying hard with the county to raise library salaries so that they are commensurate with other county salaries. I don't know yet how successful the effort will be. I believe she's been working on it for several years. Public/school library in WY

School librarian salaries are tied to the teacher scale, leaving us relatively powerless to affect change. I know the public library has low salaries which fluctuate with the county's economic health. The funding for the public library is tied to a mil levy. School library in WY

We have struggled constantly to raise salaries, but have been largely unsuccessful. Income sources include: 30% State Aid, 20% from local government and 50% is locally raised money. Raising salaries means more fundraising for the boards and they are reluctant to do any more. Public library in North Central PA

Income increased due to mineral development. We had no mineral development, but we increased salaries last year due to increased income and had an 11% shortfall in revenue this year compared with budget estimates. Public library in WY

By hard work, good research, luck, and comparing with other communities/positions in town. Library association in IA