

# Library Worklife:

HR E-News for Today's Leaders

## How the economy is affecting library services

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*This article is from the February 2010 issue.*

### A report from the 2009 ALA-APA Salary Survey

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**By Jenifer Grady**

Each year, a set of timely questions are a feature of the *ALA-APA Salary Survey: Librarian—Public and Academic*. In 2009, the responding staff was asked about the direction and percentage of impact the economy has had on library activities. Of the 1,179 libraries (701 public and 478 academic) who responded to the salary survey overall, we thank the 459 (65.5 percent) public library and 164 (34.3 percent) academic library staff who took the time to answer this question and provide detail on the services and audiences. When this article refers to staff, it means the director or human resources staff member who responded to the survey and supplied salary data for librarians on behalf of the institution.

### Has the current economic downturn resulted in changes in library services?

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Services are on the increase in public libraries, but on the decrease in academic libraries. Interestingly, the percentages are almost equally reversed. Fifty-seven percent of public libraries are increasing library services, and the same percentage of academic libraries are decreasing library services.

In public libraries, the audiences served by increased services are job seekers and the unemployed, Latinos, adults, pre-schoolers and youth, the homeless ("those without permanent addresses") and seniors. The services that are being added are assistance with online applications, computer classes, government assistance, and foreclosure workshops. Students, graduate and distance education, were the focus for academic library increases in service. They are also tuning in to the community or what one called "public taxpayers."

The decrease in services cited most often by public libraries is adult programming. Hours are being reduced and internet usage is being limited. Cuts are being made to outreach to daycares, nursing homes and schools. One library instituted a voluntary hiring freeze. Academic libraries are primarily utilizing shorter hours to save on costs.

Has the current economic downturn resulted in changes in library services?				
	Public		Academic	
	% of Libraries	# of Libraries	% of Libraries	# of Libraries
Increase of library services	57.7%	265	29.3%	48
Decrease of library services	28.8%	132	57.9%	95
Library services increased to particular audiences	26.1%	120	14.6%	24
Library services decreased to particular audiences	5.9%	27	9.1%	15
Total		459		164

The nation's libraries are being forced to acknowledge and react to a lagging economy, yet they continue to shift and monitor their ability to serve their communities, increasing services to fulfill their missions even when resources are stretched tightly.

We would love to have your feedback on this article(s)!

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