# Tenure Not Required:
## Recasting Non-Tenured Academic Librarianship to Center Stage

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## Introduction

The engaged professional academic librarian can be typecast as a tenure-track scholar. This scholar is portrayed as spending the preliminary years of their career engaged in on-and off-campus activities, striving to achieve tenure. This stereotype, however, is hardly representative of the profession at large: in Freedman's 2014 survey, roughly 65% of respondents did not have tenure.[1] The plentiful literature addressing tenure-track or faculty librarians, then, is leaving a large part of academic librarianship in the dark. While other research has been conducted in adjacent areas, there are few that approach the issue across multiple factors and means of engagement. But, what if non-tenure-track librarians were to step into the spotlight—what challenges would they face?

This study attempts to open a conversation about the professional engagement of early-career, non-tenure track librarians. It examines the factors influencing professional participation by these librarians, and their feelings regarding those factors. Based on analysis of the study results, this paper seeks to offer best practices for non-tenure track-librarians seeking to increase their professional engagement, and for institutions and organizations which support them.

## Literature Review

Professional literature addresses many topics relative to early-career librarians and their struggles. It can be difficult for new librarians to navigate their first steps into the field, and MLIS programs "[provide] little guidance on how to transition to the workforce."[2] New librarians often struggle to find full-time, professional employment, often taking multiple part-time positions to gain the necessary experience.[3]

Once hired, Lacey and Parlette-Steward note, new librarians face "transitional challenges including successfully navigating the unique culture and politics of different organizations …and including] learning the norms and procedures related to job tasks in collections, instruction, and outreach."[4] They also emphasize that new librarians are often given a very simple orientation devoid of relevant information on their job duties, leaving them unclear about what they should be doing in their positions.[5] Ly states, "Being a young, early-career library manager can be difficult."[6]

Despite such challenges, there is still hope for success. Gilman emphasizes the importance of finding a "qualified mentor";[7] Farell et al. state, "Mentoring has the potential to facilitate the professional growth and development of library and information professionals and hence ensure retention and career success."[8] Gregory focuses more on self-initiative, recommending that early-career librarians prepare a list of professional and educational goals, among other tasks.[9]

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According to Gilman, "professional development for librarians is a continuous process, one that libraries must support if they are to remain competitive in the future"[10]—and there are many opportunities for new librarians to pursue it. Farell et al. suggest that professional development opportunities such as workshops and volunteer positions help new librarians develop leadership skills.[11] For librarians at institutions which can't financially support such opportunities, Gilman recommends webinars and workshops hosted by regional organizations.[12] There is, therefore, awareness of both the challenges and opportunities facing new librarians, but without the acknowledgment and support of institutions and the profession at large, librarians will struggle to overcome these difficulties.

The particular challenges facing tenure-track librarians are well-acknowledged; as Wilkinson explains, these librarians "have an even more difficult task ahead of them: they must quickly master the expectations of professional librarianship and their institution, but also become familiar with research, academic writing, and publication."[13] The challenges faced by non-tenure-track librarians, particularly those who want to participate professionally at a level analogous to their tenure-track counterparts, are less-commonly addressed. Freedman emphasizes that "teaching faculty, administrators, and even librarians themselves lack a clear and consistent understanding of the role of academic librarians."[14] He continues, "Librarians at an early stage in their careers need to understand the norms and expectations about academic status."[15] Without a formal evaluation program, how are early-career librarians to grasp these norms and expectations?

## Methodology

A review of the literature revealed a dearth of studies specifically focused on the experience of academic librarians outside of the tenure track. The current study was designed to address this gap by surveying a diverse group of early-career, non-tenure track academic librarians regarding their current level of professional engagement and the factors influencing this engagement.

### *Recruitment of Study Participants*

Study participants were solicited across 27 listservs spanning a range of library organizations and interest groups, as well as through two of the authors' personal Twitter accounts. Listservs were selected from the American Library Association's Sympa list, as well as through consultation with colleagues in varying subject specialties, on the basis of relevance to academic librarianship; absence of duplication; likelihood of providing a large audience relevant to our study; and representation of a diversity of working areas and populations within academic librarianship and a range of library sizes and types. Excluded from consideration were lists which required fees to post or were otherwise inaccessible to non-members; ALA caucus listservs, for consistency purposes, since the majority of these were fee-based; regional or LIS-program -specific lists; and lists pertaining to areas outside of academic librarianship.

Responses were solicited from individuals who: held an MLIS or equivalent professional degree; were currently employed in a full-time (35+ hour), professional-level position at an academic library in the United States; were not currently on the tenure track; and had completed all requirements for the MLIS or equivalent degree between June 1, 2011 and June 1, 2017 ("early career" by the definition of the Association of College & Research Libraries).[16]

### *Procedure*

Data was collected using an anonymous Google Form questionnaire which asked respondents about their current positions and level of professional development and involvement, their feelings about professional involve-

ment, and the applicability of various factors which the authors hypothesized may have influenced respondents' professional involvement including: financial considerations, personal considerations, accessibility, peer support, institutional context, career progression, and professional organizational support. Respondents were invited to share information about other factors that may have influenced their involvement in free-text. Responses were solicited over a period of 8 weeks with reminders to participate distributed after 4 and 6 weeks. The questionnaire received 431 responses, of which 351 were determined to be valid based on the criteria for the study. According to graduation and placement data from *Library Journal*,[17] approximately 1,685 librarians had graduated in this time period and were working in academic library positions, of which an estimated 65% or approximately 1,096 were off the tenure track and eligible to participate. On this basis, the authors estimate that the questionnaire received a response rate of approx. 32%, with a margin of error between 4% and 5%.[18]

## Data Collection & Processing

At the conclusion of the response period, the data was moved into a Google spreadsheet. All full-text data was carefully reviewed for identifying information and anonymized. Responses which did not meet the study criteria were discarded. The remaining data was then prepared for analysis. For categorical questions where multiple responses were possible, each possible response was broken out into an individual variable and then re-coded into binary values ("1" if a response was selected by a given respondent, "0" if it was not). Free-text responses were coded according to themes such as financial considerations, personal considerations, accessibility, peer support, institutional context, career progression, and professional organizational support; these were additionally broken down into individual variables. Finally, variable names and values of text variables were simplified in order to optimize the questionnaire data for use with statistical analysis software. The cleaned dataset was imported into PSPP statistical analysis software.[19]

## Data Analysis

A correlation analysis was conducted to attempt to determine which of several different influences on participation, as well as which demographic variables (Status, Institution Category, Gender, Age, and/or Race), may be correlated with different types and/or levels of professional engagement. Professional engagement was measured based on respondents' self-reported participation in such activities as national or local organizations, committee membership or leadership, trade or academic publishing, or conference presentations.

Due to the size and complexity of the data set, the authors chose to focus on evaluating a subset of the variables. The data analysis process thus began with identifying a list of crosstab analyses to be conducted (Appendix B). The initial list included comparisons such as: presumed negative and positive influences on participation, as well as factors identified to encourage participation, against all demographic categories (Status, Institution Category, Gender, Age, and Race); and variables indicating actual levels of participation against presumed negative and positive influences and against demographic categories. Additional reports were added to the analysis list as trends and questions arose during initial data analysis.

PSPP was used to simultaneously run a crosstab and chi-square analysis for each of the relationships of interest. The asymptotic significance (asymp sig) or p-value of the chi-square test was used to identify comparisons which were not statistically significant. All crosstabs with a p-value higher than 0.1 were discarded as insignificant. The three authors simultaneously reviewed each crosstab for relationships warranting further attention, i.e., where a particularly strong correlation was indicated, or where there was a significant difference between different categories of respondents, etc. Relationships where the sample size for a given variable was extremely low (e.g., only 1 or 2 respondents) and where therefore percentage values could not be considered meaningful, were set aside.

## Results
### Respondent Demographics

In analyzing the results of this study, the homogeneity of the respondent sample proved a major barrier and concern. While the authors hoped to be able to make at least initial, empirical statements as to the relationship between various demographic categories and barriers to professional engagement, the data collected was not diverse enough to responsibly support any conclusions in this direction. The authors strongly recommend that further attention be given to examining the questions posed in this study with a broader and more diverse sample.

### Status

The majority of respondents (53%) identified themselves as currently in Staff/Administrative positions. 44% identified themselves as Faculty and 3% identified themselves as non-faculty with a status similar to tenure.

### Institution Type

Most respondents stated that they were currently employed in some form of Doctoral- (50%) or Master's-granting (24%) institution. Just short of 19% were employed in some form of Baccalaureate-granting institution. The remaining 5% of respondents were employed at Associates-granting or Special Focus institutions. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Historically Black College & Universities (HBCUs), and Tribal Institutions were represented across multiple categories, and there was additionally one response from a Native American-Serving Nontribal Institution (NASNTI).

### Age

By far the majority of respondents (66%) indicated that they were between the ages of 26-35. The next largest category of respondents was ages 36-45 (19%), followed by 46-55 (6%), 25 or under (5%) and over 55 (5%).

### Gender Identity

While respondents represented a variety of gender identities, the vast majority of respondents (81%) identified as female and 14% identified as male. A range of other identities, including gender non-conforming/bigender, transgender male, agender, and genderqueer. Each of these identities represented less than 2% of the respondent pool. An additional 1% of respondents preferred not to share their gender identity.

In addition to the unevenly-distributed sample, another limitation of the study's data on gender identity is that the vast majority of respondents who identified outside of binary gender categories (male or female) fell into the 26-35 age group. Thus, any relationship between professional engagement and gender identity could not be demonstrated to have a strong correlation or to accurately represent non-binary librarians outside of the 26-35 age group.

### Race/Ethnic Identity

Race and ethnic identity were another set of categories where a variety of identities were represented, but most not substantially. 84% of respondents indicated that they were White, Non-Latinx. The next largest group at 4% consisted of White, Latinx librarians, followed by Black, Non-Latinx librarians (2%). Approximately 2% of respondents indicated that they "did not know" or "preferred not to respond." There were a total of 16 other identities represented, but all fell well below 2% of overall responses.

| TABLE 1 Self-Indicated Racial and Ethnic Identities of Respondents | | |
|---|---|---|
| Identity(ies) Expressed | Freq. | % of Total |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native, Hispanic or Latinx | 1 | 0.28% |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native, Metis, White, Not Hispanic or Latinx | 1 | 0.28% |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native, White, Not Hispanic or Latinx | 2 | 0.57% |
| Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Not Hispanic or Latinx | 1 | 0.28% |
| Asian, Not Hispanic or Latinx | 5 | 1.42% |
| Asian, White, Hispanic or Latinx | 1 | 0.28% |
| Asian, White, Not Hispanic or Latinx | 3 | 0.85% |
| Black or African American, Not Hispanic or Latinx | 8 | 2.28% |
| Black or African American, Not listed, [Ethnic identity not indicated] | 1 | 0.28% |
| Black or African American, White, Not Hispanic or Latinx | 2 | 0.57% |
| Chicana, Hispanic or Latinx | 1 | 0.28% |
| Not listed, Hispanic or Latinx | 1 | 0.28% |
| Not listed, [Ethnic identity not indicated] | 1 | 0.28% |
| Not listed, Hispanic or Latinx | 1 | 0.28% |
| Not listed, Not Hispanic or Latinx | 1 | 0.28% |
| Unknown, Not Hispanic or Latinx | 2 | 0.57% |
| [Racial and ethnic identity not indicated] | 6 | 1.71% |
| White, Hispanic or Latinx | 14 | 3.99% |
| White, Not Hispanic or Latinx | 294 | 83.76% |
| White, [Ethnic identity not indicated] | 5 | 1.42% |

### Response Themes

The following were identified as common and repeating themes throughout analysis of the study data, and warrant further consideration:
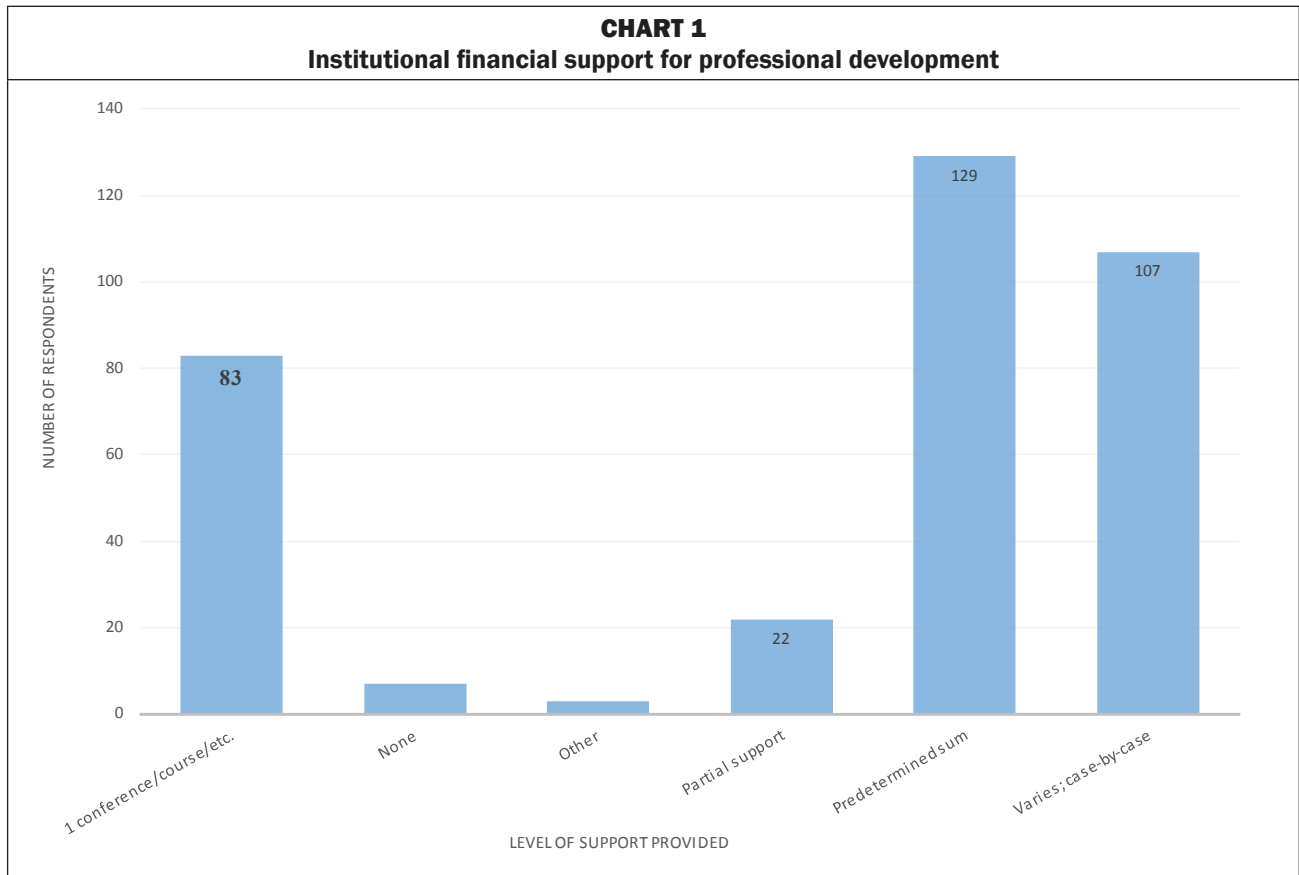
### Funding

Overall, the majority of early-career librarians indicated that they receive some level of funding for professional development. In order of highest to lowest percentages, 37% of respondents indicated that they receive a predetermined sum for funding, followed by those who indicated that their level of funding varies (31%). Approximately 24% stated that they receive funding for one conference or course. Of special note is that funding was, overall, evenly distributed across status categories (faculty, staff/administrator, etc.) (chart 1).

Institutional funding had a clear, positive impact on engagement; 100% of non-faculty with status similar to tenure, 75% of administrative staff, and 73% of faculty named this as a positive influence. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who had funding in some capacity were always more likely to name funding as a positive influence on their participation. 69% of all respondents indicated that more funding would encourage them to engage more actively.

Personal funds, too, were important for many respondents, and 57% of respondents receiving no funding from their institution identified lack of personal resources as a negative influence on their involvement.

'Outside' funding (e.g., scholarships and other extraneous funding opportunities) appeared to have a particular influence on trade publications as a form of engagement: 40% of respondents who had published in trade

**CHART 1**
**Institutional financial support for professional development**



journals named outside funding as a positive influence on their engagement (for comparison, this was indicated by only 22% of the overall sample).

Of all forms of engagement, participation in national organizations was most heavily impacted by funding concerns. The majority of respondents in every funding category participated in a national organization, except for those receiving no funding at all—of which only 43% participated in national organizations.

## *Travel*

The study data also showed a number of ways in which ability and willingness to travel influence professional engagement—logically so, since many opportunities require some type of travel. An impressive 72% of respondents participating in a national organization, 69% of respondents who had presented at a conference, and 72% of those who had been involved in committee leadership, indicated willingness and ability to travel as a positive influence on their level of professional engagement.

There was also an interesting correlation between publication in trade journals and travel—74% of respondents who had published in a trade publication identified this as a positive influence (compare to 63% of the total sample).

While the authors examined the correlation between demographics and travel (with the limitations described above), the only notable relationship was with age: the percentage of respondents negatively impacted by inability or unwillingness to travel increased by age group, with 14% of respondents 36-45 and 31% of respondents over 55 listing this as a negative influence. In no other age group did more than 10% of respondents identify travel as a negative influence on their engagement.

## Publishing

A total of 73% of respondents had never published in an academic journal. Three sub-themes emerged around academic publishing, however. First, 64% of those who had published in an academic journal indicated that invitation(s) from a colleague had been a positive influence; secondly, 47% of those who had published in an academic journal identified networking as a positive influence (this is in contrast to 30% of those who had never published in an academic journal).

An even-larger percentage of respondents (86%) had never published in a trade publication. However, of those who had done so, 68% indicated that the possibility for career advancement had a positive influence on their professional engagement, and 50% indicated that feeling welcomed by a professional organization had been a positive influence.

## Conferences

Although a variety of factors can influence an individual's ability to attend conferences, responses to this study seem to indicate a stronger relationship to conference attendance through local organizations than at the national level. Respondents who said that conference attendance had been a positive influence on their professional engagement were more likely to have participated in a professional organization. In fact, 64% of respondents who indicated conference attendance had been a positive influence were active in a local organization, and 74% were active in a national organization.

Institutional support (even beyond funding) was also an important factor; 47% of respondents who had presented at a conference said that institutional support of an administrative nature (e.g., time release) was a positive influence on their engagement.

**CHART 2**
**Respondents in each age bracket who had given a conference presentation**
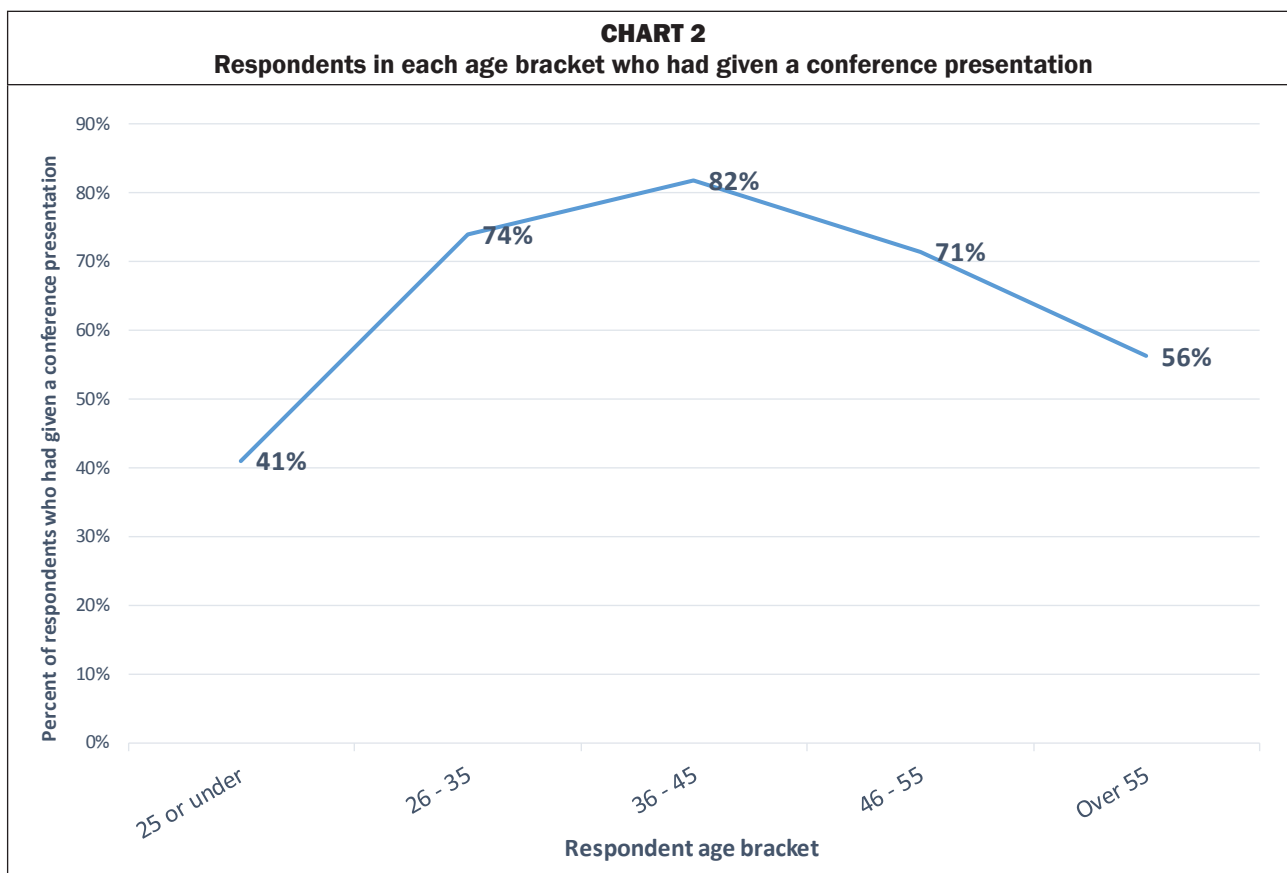
There was a clear correlation between collegiality and conference-related engagement; 43% of conference presenters said that feeling welcome was a positive influence on their professional engagement, and 57% said that collaboration with colleagues had been a positive influence.

Interestingly, the study data also showed a correlation between respondents' likelihood of having presented at a conference, and age demographic. Conference presentations peaked in the 36-45 age bracket, with an impressive 82% of respondents in this category indicating that they had previously given a conference presentation. The age brackets with the smallest percentage of presentations were respondents 25 and under (of whom 41% had presented) and 55 and over (of whom 56% had presented (chart 2).

## Committee Work

Committee participation can be integral to professional engagement and to the successful functioning of professional organizations. The authors paid particular attention to committee engagement as an important indicator both of individual involvement and of the factors underlying organizational leadership.

The data indicated that committee involvement was closely tied to self-motivation; overall, 93% of people who participated on a committee said that personal interest had been a positive influence on their level of engagement (compared to 89% of the total sample); 87% indicated that a desire to develop skills had been a positive influence (compared to 84% of the total sample). Additionally, 60% of those who named personal interest as an influence and 60% of those who named desire to develop skills as an influence, indicated that they were involved in committee work.

Networking was slightly more influential for committee participants, with 40% of this group naming networking as a positive influence compared to 34% of the overall sample. Administrative support was also important: nearly half (49%) of committee participants identified institutional administrative support as a positive influence, and only 15% indicated lack thereof as a negative influence (in comparison, a slightly-higher 43% of the total sample identified this as a positive influence and 18%, as a negative influence). Higher still, 65% of respondents who participated on a committee said that conference attendance had been a positive influence on their professional engagement, compared to 59% of the sample as a whole.

As with conference participation, collegiality was a notable factor: 48% of respondents who had participated on a committee said that feeling welcomed had positively influenced their engagement. Only 39% of respondents overall named this as a positive influence.

Respondents who had held leadership roles on committees were influenced by slightly different factors. Of those who had held such roles, 89% named desire to develop skills as a positive influence; 72% listed ability and willingness to travel; and 56% named the possibility of professional advancement. However, feeling welcomed was even more important: 52% of those holding committee leadership roles identified this as a positive influence. A strong correlation between involvement in committee leadership and networking was apparent; 46% of respondents who indicated that they had served in a committee leadership position(s) identified networking as a positive influence on their level of professional engagement. In contrast, only 29% of respondents who had not served in committee leadership identified networking as a positive influence.

## Mentors

Mentors contributed greatly to respondents' professional engagement. Over half, 58%, of respondents who had a current personal mentor expressed that having a mentor had positively influenced their professional involvement.

The data revealed that mentorship appears to have an influence on participation in a national organization. 72% of respondents with a current mentor—and 69% of respondents who had previously had one—indicated

that they had participated in a national organization, as opposed to 51% of those who had never had a mentor. Thus, participants who had had a mentor at any point were far more likely to participate nationally.

Although the sample size was not large or diverse enough to produce statistically-significant results, the authors did note that respondents who identified as Latinx or Native American were significantly more likely to have had a mentor than those who identified as Asian, White, and/or Black. Additionally, while only four responses were received from librarians at Baccalaureate-granting Hispanic Serving Institutions, all four of these indicated that lack of a mentor had negatively influenced their professional engagement.

### National Organizations

National organizations also serve as critical vessels for career development through offerings such conferences, webinars, committees, and other opportunities. Respondents who indicated they were active in a national organization were (logically) more likely to have had positive experiences with professional organizations and to name organizational activities as positive influences. Two-thirds, 66%, of respondents who had participated in a national organization named conference attendance as a positive influence on their engagement. Networking as named as a positive influence by 40% of respondents who had participated in national organizations, compared to only 34% of the sample overall. Additionally, while those who participated in a national organization were more likely to name prior involvement as a positive influence, this only accounted for 21% of national organization participants (compared to 7% of non-participants or 17% of the sample overall).

The authors had hypothesized that feeling welcome would be an important influence on engagement with national organizations, but this correlation was weaker than anticipated—44% of national organization participants, only 39% of the sample overall, indicated that feeling welcome has been a positive influence. In contrast, the number of respondents indicating that feeling unwelcome had been a negative influence was so low, that it was insufficient to produce statistically-significant results.

Opportunity for career advancement may be a more significant motivating factor for participation in national organizations; 54% of respondents who participated in a national organization named this as a positive influence compared to only 35% of those who did not participate in a national organization. Participation in national organizations is also often linked to available funding, and this was a recurring theme throughout the data. Out of those respondents who participated in a national organization, 55% said conference fees had negatively influenced the extent of their professional engagement.

### Preparation

The study data indicated that respondents felt unprepared for professional involvement in a number of ways. Nearly a third, 27%, of all respondents listed "don't know where to start" as a negative influence on their professional engagement, and indications of such 'professional overload' appeared throughout free-text responses. Furthermore, when asked to rate how well they felt that MLIS coursework had prepared them for participation in professional service, 42% of respondents labeled themselves as a 3 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing "not at all prepared" and 5 representing "extremely prepared." The second-largest group (25%) rated themselves a 2 out of 5 on the same scale. On the whole, respondents indicated a lack of confidence that MLIS education had prepared them to take an active role in the profession. In fact, only 9% of participants indicated that coursework from MLIS graduate programs had been a positive influence on their professional engagement.

### Overall Influences

In addition to the above-mentioned themes, much can be learned from the most frequently-identified positive

and negative influences. Totals in these areas, however, of course cannot account for specific institutional and personal funding situations.

## Positive Influences

Among the 351 survey respondents, the most common positive influence identified was self-motivation and/or personal-interest (311 responses), followed by a desire to develop skills (293 responses) and financial support from their home institution (261 responses).

The least influential factors were prior involvement with professional activities (58 responses); job requirements and/or mandates from administration (outside of tenure-track requirements) (57 responses), and, lastly, preparation as part of MLIS coursework (only 30 responses).

## Negative Influences

Respondents were most likely to be negatively-influenced by financially-prohibitive membership and/or conference fees; this represented 181 responses. The other most-common responses to this question included lack of personal financial resources (160 responses), and workload / time management challenges (159 responses).

However, the data did not indicate that respondents were significantly negatively influenced by a lack of professional network (19 responses); dissuasion or other negative influence from a mentor (7 responses); or language and/or cultural barriers (5 responses).

## Encouraging Factors

In addition to naming positive and negative influences, respondents were also asked to indicate factors which would encourage them to increase their levels of professional engagement. The largest number of respondents, 258, indicated that lower membership and/or conference fees would encourage them to participate more actively. This was followed by an increase in funding for professional attendance (207 responses) and an increase in local opportunities and/or programming (140 responses).

The least 'popular' factors in this category included better recognition for professional activities within professional organizations (67 responses); more welcoming environments in professional organizations (59 responses); and more opportunities to network with other professionals (43 responses).

## Discussion

Principally, eight major themes emerged as influences on the professional participation of non-tenure track early career librarians. These themes are funding, travel, publishing, conferences, committee work, mentors, national organizations, and preparation.

It was surprising to discover that most of the respondents received some level of funding for professional development and engagement. The authors had expected this number to be much lower than the results revealed. Respondents indicated that their level of engagement was heavily influenced by funding both from their own institutions and from outside sources. Those who do not receive funding indicated that they are much less likely to be involved in the activities of national organizations. With 69% of all respondents indicating that more funding would encourage them to engage more actively, it is obvious that funding is a major factor in the ability of early career non-tenure track librarians to engage in professional development activities. Breaking down such barriers should therefore be a priority to entities that have control over funding for these librarians.

In synthesizing commonalities among participants, it appeared that many of the themes were interconnected. The authors noted that participation in the profession seemed to revolve around conferences, which clearly influences committee work, but also, more surprisingly, publishing trends.

The study results also emphasized the positive influence of mentors. With 58% of respondents indicating that a mentor was a positive influence on their professional engagement, it is clear that mentor programs have a beneficial influence on early-career librarians in this category. In contrast, respondents indicated they are poorly prepared for professional engagement by graduate programs in library and information science studies. With nearly one-third of respondents indicating that they do not know where to start when getting involved in the profession—and a mere 9% of participants indicating that their MLS/MLIS coursework had prepared them for professional engagement—it is clear that MLS/MLIS programs could incorporate a heavier emphasis on professional engagement to better prepare non-tenure track librarians to start on their career paths. Though this issue has been largely ignored in the discourse of professional organizations, there are many questions to consider when assuring best practices of implementing and integrating professional engagement into library school curricula, and the authors firmly believe that professional organizations should take it upon themselves to spearhead this change. To assist with filling this void temporarily, the authors have included a short list of recommended resources for early career non-tenure track librarians to serve as a starting point for discovering professional engagement opportunities (Appendix A).

## Conclusion

There are several areas which warrant further consideration based on the results of this analysis. First, the authors recommend that professional engagement be addressed in graduate library school programs. Given the low number of respondents who indicated that graduate coursework had been a positive influence on their levels of professional engagement—and the number of respondents who stated that they "don't know where to start"—addressing professional engagement during graduate coursework would serve as a useful orientation to the multitude of available opportunities.

Second: funding plays a large role in professional engagement and ranks in the top three positive and negative influences identified in this study, as well as in the top three factors most likely to encourage further involvement. To address the affordability of participation in professional associations, the authors recommend that professional organizations reexamine their fee structures and consider incorporating fees reflective of an individual's income bracket, job type (e.g., tenure vs. non-tenure), or specific funding resources at their home institution (e.g., set funds vs. those who receive a conference paid in full). In turn, eligibility for outside scholarships for conferences could easily take these factors into consideration (as some already do); in particular, ensuring that those within lower income brackets are eligible for these opportunities is critical to increased engagement from early-career non-tenure track librarians. Funding from scholarships for conference attendance should be aggressively advertised, particularly in venues of interest to non-tenure track librarians, to ensure high visibility and opportunity to apply.

Thirdly, the data indicates a lack of understanding about opportunities in professional organizations among many non-tenure track early career librarians. In addition to all pre-existing initiatives from professional organizations—e.g., "get involved" sessions, marketing, etc.—the authors suggest that professional organizations re-examine how they advertise opportunities to participate in their work. Further transparency seems to be important, as it appears that current initiatives need to be supplemented with easy how-to guides for getting involved in organizations based on professionals' interests. While this is not a new idea, current efforts may need to be supplemented to reach all individuals. For example, tenure-track librarians often seek opportunities

to participate in professional organizations due to tenure and/or job requirements; this study indicates that non-tenure track librarians might not actively seek the same opportunities out, but would consider participating if the opportunities were easier to find. As self-motivation was the largest positive factor influencing professional engagement in this study's participants, it is not surprising that many librarians seek out professional engagement opportunities on their own. Professional organizations should continue to develop and advertise programs designed to guide newly-minted professionals in getting involved, even when their job requirements may not require them to do so.

## Areas for Future Research

The authors' attempts to compare the demographics of this study sample with the demographics of the profession as a whole, revealed unanticipated limitations in the available data. The American Library Association last published a study of member demographics in 2017,[20] covering only limited racial identities (i.e., no representation of librarians identifying with two or more races), only binary gender identities, and no information about demographics across different types of libraries. More detailed racial and ethnic identity data on librarians in educational contexts, by institution type, is available from the National Center for Education Statistics,[21] but this, again, represents only binary gender identities. Other data, through *ACRLMetrics* and the *ARL Annual Salary Survey*, requires a subscription. In particular, information on gender identity in the library professions is still quite limited.[22] While recognizing the costs and logistics involved in producing such data, the authors recommend that more attention be given both to collecting updated information and to making that information widely available, for the purposes of better communication around questions of identity—and how they may influence issues such as professional engagement—across the profession.

Finally, a single study cannot claim to account for the experiences of all early-career, non-tenure track librarians. It is clear that more research is needed in this area. In particular, further research with a broader and more-diverse sample, and utilizing methodology such as ethnographic methods, focus groups, and surveys catered to historically marginalized populations in order to obtain a better sample which can speak more accurately to correlations between different demographics and the professional engagement of early-career, non-tenure-track librarians, is strongly recommended.

## Acknowledgments

# Appendix A. Recommended Resources for Early-Career Librarians:

*This list is by no means comprehensive. The authors intend this list to be a starting place for those who are not sure how to begin to get involved with the profession.*

## Committee Involvement:

American Library Association (ALA) Divisions & Round Tables Committee Volunteer Form: http://www.ala.org/aboutala/committees/volunteer/frm_vol

- ALA New Members Round Table (NMRT): http://www.ala.org/rt/nmrt/about-nmrt

## Conference Funding and Scholarships:

- ALA Grants and Fellowships (topics other than conferences included): http://www.ala.org/awards-grants/awards/browse/sclp?showfilter=no
- American Psychological Association (APA) Librarian Conference Travel Awards: https://www.apa.org/about/awards/librarian-travel.aspx
- Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL)Conference Scholarships: https://conference.acrl.org/scholarships/
- Bogle Pratt International Travel Fund: http://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/iro/awardsactivities/bogleprattaward
- Electronic Resources & Libraries (ER&L) + Digital Library Federation (DLF) Cross-Pollinator Travel Award: http://www.electroniclibrarian.org/erlplus/crosspollinator/
- NMRT Annual Conference Professional Development Attendance Award: http://www.ala.org/awards-grants/nmrt-annual-conference-professional-development-attendance-award

## Mentoring Programs:

- ACRL: Mentoring: http://www.ala.org/acrl/membership/mentoring
- ALA Mentoring Resources: http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/mentoring/mentoring_and_recruitment_efforts
- Medical Library Association: "Find a Mentor": https://www.mlanet.org/page/mentoring

## Networking

- ALA Electronic Discussion Lists: http://lists.ala.org/sympa
- ALA Networking Advice: http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/employment/career-resources/networking

## Publishing

- ACRL Research Awards/Grants: http://www.ala.org/acrl/awards/researchawards
- ACRL Scholarly Communication Toolkit: Library Publishing Programs: https://acrl.libguides.com/scholcomm/toolkit/librarypublishing
- A Library Writer's Blog: http://librarywriting.blogspot.com
- Music Library Association: Writing and Publishing for the Librarian: https://www.musiclibraryassoc.org/page/WritingAndPublishing

# Appendix B. List of Analyses Conducted

## Frequency Analyses:

- Demographic variables (Status, institution category, gender identity, age, racial & ethnic identity)
- Positive influences
- Negative influences
- Encouraging factors
- Participation variables
- Workshop, course and certification variables

## Initial Crosstab & Chi-square Analyses:

- Demographic categories vs. presumed positive influences
- Demographic categories vs. presumed negative influences
- Demographic categories vs. participation variables
- Participation variables vs. presumed positive influences
- Participation variables vs. presumed negative influences
- Status vs. funding information

## Additional Crosstab & Chi-square Analyses:

- Mentor variables vs. participation variables
- Funding as encouraging factor vs. funding information
- Encouraging factors vs. presumed positive influences
- Encouraging factors vs. presumed negative influences
- Institution category vs. funding information
- Mentors as a positive influence vs. mentor variables
- Networking as a positive influence vs. mentor variables
- Networking as a positive influence vs. networking as a negative influence
- Coursework as a positive influence vs. MLIS preparation rating
- Feeling welcomed as a positive influence vs. feeling unwelcome as a negative influence
- Age vs. racial & ethnic identity
- Publication variables vs. mentor variables
- Age vs. gender identity
- Age, gender identity and racial identity vs. mentor variables
- Funding information vs. presumed negative influences
- Institutional funding as a positive influence vs. funding information
- Top positive influences vs. participation—
  - » Self-interest as positive influence vs. participation variables
  - » Desire to develop skills as positive influence vs. participation variables
  - » Institutional funds as a positive influence vs. participation variables
- Top negative influences—
  - » Workload as negative influence vs. institutional status
  - » Workload as negative influence vs. institution type
  - » Fees as negative influence vs. participation variables

- » Personal financial resources as negative influence vs. participation variables
- » Workload as negative influence vs. participation variables
- Top positive influences vs. encouragement —
  - » Self-interest as positive influence vs. encouraging factors
  - » Desire to develop skills as positive influence vs. encouraging factors
  - » Institutional funds as positive influence vs. encouraging factors
- Top negative influences vs. encouragement—
  - » Fees as negative influence vs. encouraging factors
  - » Personal financial resources as negative influence vs. encouraging factors
  - » Workload as negative influence vs. encouraging factors
- Demographic variables vs. encouraging factors

# Appendix C. Survey Questions

1. Do you acknowledge that you understand your rights as a participant, and give your informed consent to participate in this study?
2. Do you hold an MLIS or equivalent degree?
3. Did you complete all requirements for the MLIS or equivalent degree between June 1, 2011 and June 1, 2017?
4. Are you currently employed full-time (35+ hours) in a professional-level position at an academic library?
5. What is your status at your current institution?
   - ❍ Full faculty or academic status—WITH tenure
   - ❍ Full faculty or academic status—WITHOUT tenure
   - ❍ Staff/administrator status
   - ❍ Non-faculty, but with status similar to tenure—WITH service requirements
   - ❍ Non-faculty, but with status similar to tenure—WITHOUT service requirements
   - ❍ Other:
6. Do you currently reside and work in the United States or one of its affiliated territories?
7. For how many years have you been employed in a full-time, professional librarian position since completing your MLIS?
   - ❍ 0–1 years
   - ❍ 1–2 years
   - ❍ 2–3 years
   - ❍ 3–4 years
   - ❍ 4–5 years
   - ❍ 5–6 years
   - ❍ 6–7 years
   - ❍ Other:
8. At which category of institution are you currently employed?
   - ❍ Doctoral University
   - ❍ Master's College or University
   - ❍ Baccalaureate (4-year) College
   - ❍ Associate College
   - ❍ Other:
9. Is your institution one of the following? Check all that apply.
   - ❍ Tribal College/University
   - ❍ Historically-Black College or University (HBCU)
   - ❍ Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)
   - ❍ None of these
10. Since completing your MLIS, have you…
    - ❍ …Been active in a local organization?
    - ❍ …Been active in a national organization?
    - ❍ …Served on a committee for a professional organization?
    - ❍ …Served in a leadership position for a professional organization (committee chair, executive board member, etc.)?

○ …Published in a trade publication such as American Libraries or Library Journal?

○ …Published in a traditional academic publication?

○ …Presented at a conference (library-related or otherwise)?

11. Since completing your MLIS, have you…

○ …taken any additional COURSEWORK for professional development purposes?

○ …taken any WORKSHOPS for professional development purposes?

○ …pursued any additional CERTIFICATIONS?

Possible responses:

○ Funded by my employer

○ Funded partially by my employer / partially myself

○ Funded through outside sources (scholarships, etc.)

○ Funded myself

○ At no cost (e.g., a free, online course, or other opportunities)

○ No

12. What is the level of financial support provided by your institution for professional development?

○ Complete support for at least 1 conference/course/etc. per year

○ Pre-determined annual sum, which I can allocate as I see fit

○ Partial support

○ No support

○ Varies; case-by-case basis

○ Other:

13. Does your institution provide a mentorship program for new hires and/or other library staff?

14. Do you, personally, have an individual(s) that you would consider a professional "mentor"? *

○ Yes, currently

○ Not currently (had one in the past)

○ I have never had an individual that I would consider a professional mentor

○ Other:

15. How prepared do you feel to participate in professional service, based on your MLIS coursework?

Not at all prepared 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely prepared

16. How prepared to you feel to participate in professional service, based on your experiences post- MLIS?

Not at all prepared 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely prepared

17. Which of the following factors have POSITIVELY contributed to your current level of professional involvement?

○ Institutional support—financial

○ Conference funding from outside my institution

○ Membership / conference fees seem reasonable

○ Self-motivation / personal interest

○ Desire to develop skills

○ Willingness and ability to travel (outside of financial considerations)

○ Guidance from a mentor

○ Invitations from a colleague

○ Influence from / collaboration with active colleagues

○ Networking at professional or other events

❍ Job requirement / mandated by supervisor or administration
❍ Promotion requirements
❍ Institutional support—administrative (e.g., time release)
❍ Possibility for career advancement
❍ Graduate coursework
❍ Prior involvement (i.e., concurrent with my MLIS program)
❍ Conference attendance
❍ Feel welcomed in professional organizations, conferences, etc.
❍ Committee service / requirements of professional organization
❍ Other:

18. Which of the following factors have NEGATIVELY contributed to your current level of professional involvement (or lack thereof)?

❍ Lack of institutional support—financial
❍ Lack of (personal) financial resources (distinct from institutional support)
❍ Membership and/or conference fees are financially prohibitive
❍ Lack of self-motivation / personal interest
❍ Feel intimidated
❍ Previous failure / rejection
❍ Personal considerations (health, family, etc.)
❍ Unable or unwilling to travel (outside of financial considerations)
❍ Don't know how to start / who to contact
❍ "Professional overload"—too many events, organizations, etc. to choose from
❍ Language and/or cultural barriers
❍ Lack of professional mentor(s)
❍ Negative influence from mentor(s) (i.e., they've dissuaded me from participating)
❍ Lack of support and/or encouragement from colleagues
❍ Lack of professional network
❍ Lack of institutional support—administrative
❍ Lack of promotion or similar incentives
❍ Workload / time management
❍ Feel underprepared by my graduate coursework
❍ Feel discouraged by my graduate coursework, e.g., perception that involvement is primarily for tenure-track librarians
❍ Lack of clear opportunities to develop skills
❍ Programming / opportunities offered are not relevant to my current work
❍ Feel uncomfortable / unwelcome in professional organizations, conferences, etc.
❍ Negative perception of professional organizations
❍ Other:

19. What would encourage you to be more active in professional service?

❍ Increased funding for conference attendance (institutional or otherwise)
❍ Lower membership and/or conference fees
❍ More opportunities and/or programming interesting to me personally
❍ Better guidance and/or resources for choosing relevant and appropriate options

- ❍ Better communication from organizations, publications, etc. about opportunities
- ❍ More opportunities and/or programming local to me (i.e., not requiring travel)
- ❍ More opportunities to participate virtually
- ❍ Better access to professional mentors
- ❍ Invitation from someone active in professional service (a committee member, editor, etc.)
- ❍ Influence from / collaboration with active colleagues
- ❍ More support and/or encouragement from colleagues
- ❍ More opportunities to network with other professionals
- ❍ More opportunities and/or programming relevant to my current work
- ❍ Increased recognition of professional activities for the purposes of promotion, professional advancement, etc.
- ❍ Lighter workload / more time
- ❍ Better recognition for professional activities within the profession generally More-welcoming environment in professional organizations, conferences, etc.
- ❍ More recognition of opportunities for non-tenure-track librarians to contribute
- ❍ Other:

20. Is there anything else you would like to share with us regarding your current level of professional development? Please feel free to expand upon previous answers, share other concerns, etc.

21. What is your age?
    - ❍ 25 or under
    - ❍ 26–35
    - ❍ 36–45
    - ❍ 46–55
    - ❍ Over 55

22. I identify my gender as…
    - ❍ Female
    - ❍ Male
    - ❍ Transgender
    - ❍ Gender non-conforming
    - ❍ Prefer not to answer
    - ❍ Not listed

23. Please feel free to provide further clarification here if you responded "not listed" or the previous categories do not adequately describe your identity. Your response here is strictly voluntary.

24. Which of the following best represents your racial identity? Choose all that apply.
    - ❍ American Indian or Alaskan Native
    - ❍ Asian
    - ❍ Black or African American
    - ❍ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
    - ❍ White / Caucasian
    - ❍ Not listed
    - ❍ Prefer not to answer

25. Please feel free to provide further clarification here if you responded "not listed" or the previous categories do not adequately describe your identity. Your response here is strictly voluntary.

26. Which of the following best represents your ethnic identity? Choose all that apply.
   - ○ Hispanic or Latinx
   - ○ Not Hispanic or Latinx
   - ○ Prefer not to answer

## Endnotes

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