

Online Survey of Video Librarians: Summary Results

This survey conducted by Michael Brewer & Meghann Matwichuk, Spring 2007. There were 200 complete responses. Listservs on which librarians were recruited to take the survey included VRT, Videolib, Publib, Collib-I, AASL, SLA, OLAC, CJCLS, CCUMC, NextGen, NMRT, and AMIA.

General Results

Demographics:

- Almost all responses were from librarians working in the US (95%) and were fairly evenly split between academic (53%) and public (41%) libraries. Only 6% of responses came from corporate, state or school librarians.
- The majority of video librarians are between 50-59 (40%), with about another quarter each in their 30s and 40s. Only a handful are younger than 30 (5%) or older than 60 (8%).
- Most (56%) expect to be in this field at least another 10 years. Only a few (8%) expect to retire in the next 5 years.

Educational & Experiential Background

- Most (87%) video librarians hold a Masters in Library or Information Science. A handful hold only an Associates or Bachelors (3%), none of those surveyed held a Ph.D. and 6% had no degree at all.
- About a third (31%) had completed a degree (Bachelors 10%; Masters 7% or Ph.D 1%) or significant undergraduate (7%) or graduate (8%) coursework in a field related to visual media.¹
- A small number previously worked professionally in a film/media-related industry (Filmmaking/Production 7%; Distribution/Sales 2%; and 5% in other areas).
- About a quarter (23%) hold a Masters in a discipline other than Library or Information Science.
- Video librarians overwhelmingly indicate that their on the job experience has been most important in them carrying out their daily work. The library science degree comes in a distant second, followed by their degree or training in a media related field.

Employment History

- Only a fifth (20%) got their first professional position in video librarianship and very few had apprenticed under a video librarian (6%) or worked as non-librarian staff in a video/media department (17%) before getting their current job.
- Most (72%) have worked for only one employer as a video librarian.
- More than half (62%) those working as video librarians have been doing so for less than 10 years, but a quarter (25%) have been at it for more than 15 years.

Video/Media-Related Responsibilities

- Most video librarians are engaged primarily either in collection development (42%) or in cataloging (24%). Only a small minority called themselves Generalists (10%), Reference Specialists (5%), engaged in Instruction/Education (2%) or Administration (16%).
- About a quarter (23%) of video librarians work at least 75% of their time doing video/media-related work. More than half (60%) work less than half-time in this area.
- Most (59%) are responsible for purchasing media as a format (VHS, DVDs, etc.) for their library. Most (56%) are also responsible for managing media as a format in their library.
- While almost half (40%) do not manage any other staff as part of their job, a sizable number (40%) manage 2 or more staff, with 14% managing more than 5 staff members.
- Only about a third (30%) negotiate PPR or are involved in providing public screenings of films as part of their job.

Job Satisfaction

- On a scale of 1-5, ¾ of video librarians were very satisfied (4 or 5 on the 1-5 scale) with their jobs, while only 5% were very unsatisfied (1 or 2 on the scale).
- On the same scale, a lower percentage (69%) were very satisfied with video librarianship as a career, but only a few more (5.3%) were very unsatisfied.

Professional Memberships

¹ The numbers do not add up here, as multiple responses were allowed (e.g. one could have completed both an undergraduate minor as well as graduate coursework).

- Only half (50%) are members of the Video Librarians' Listserv and just over a quarter (26%) are members of VRT. The few who used to be members but aren't any more (4%) indicated that the high ALA dues were the reason for them discontinuing their membership.

Specific Questions for Academic Librarians

Employment

- Nearly half (47%) of the academic librarians surveyed work for institutions that award Doctorates as the highest degree, and more than a quarter work for institutions whose highest degree is a Master's.
- More than half of the academic librarians surveyed (60%) work for institutions that give their librarians faculty status, and nearly that number (56%) give their librarians tenure or the equivalent.
- Service is a required part of more than half (56%) of the surveyed academic librarians' jobs, but only a third (34%) have scholarship as a requirement. However, a quarter of those for whom service (25%) or scholarship (29%) are not required indicate that it is strongly encouraged.
- Two-thirds of those surveyed either work as adjunct faculty (16%) or do not, but have the option of doing so at their institution (50%).

Significant Differences between Public & Academic Librarians' Answers:

Educational & Experiential Background

- About twice as many academic librarians (39% to 20%) have completed a degree or significant coursework in a field related to visual media.
- Academic librarians were about four times as likely to have a second advanced degree (Masters or Ph.D) other than the MLS (37% to 10%).
- Academic librarians were more likely than public librarians (25% to 16%) to have had their first professional position in video/media.
- Academic librarians were also more likely to have worked in media/video librarianship in more than one institution (33% to 21%).
- There seems to be greater seniority in academic libraries in video librarianship, as nearly half (46%) have been in the field for 10 or more years, while in public libraries, this number is closer to a quarter (24%).
- More academic librarians identify themselves as having mentored another video librarian (21%) than public librarians (4%).

Video/Media-Related Responsibilities

- Twice as many public librarians (60%) identify their work as primarily being in collection development as academic librarians (29%). While twice as many academic librarians as public librarians identify their primary work as being in administration (20% to 9%) or as the work of a generalist (11% to 4%).
- Surprisingly, more academic librarians negotiate PPR (35%) than public librarians (21%), but nearly twice as many public librarians are involved in public screenings of films (43% to 24%).

Job Satisfaction

- A higher percentage of public librarians "love" their current job (42% to 32%), but academic more academic librarians say they "love" video librarianship as a career (34% to 32%).

Professional Memberships

- More academic librarians are members of the Video Librarians listserv (54% to 44%) and VRT (31% to 21%) than are public librarians.

Pressing Issues Facing Video Librarianship:

- When asked what the most pressing issues facing the field were, both groups mention as major issues:
 - Keeping up with new formats and technologies
 - Countering anti-media/video bias in administration
- Academic librarians overwhelmingly cite copyright and licensing issues as paramount
- Public librarians are more concerned about cataloging and access issues (including censorship)