REAL QUESTIONS, REAL PEOPLE, REAL ANSWERS:

Identifying and Sustaining Organizational Health through a Self-Assessment of Alternative Work Arrangements

Susanna Cowan and Lauren Slingluff*

BACKGROUND

Like many academic institutions in the United States, the University of Connecticut completely shut down (with rare exception) in person instruction and work beginning March 2020. For many staff, the mandate to work mostly from home remained in place through the 2020-2021 academic year. In the summer of 2021, staff were informed that proposed hybrid work schedules would be supported for the fall semester, with supervisor, academic or administrative area, and central HR approval. There was an understanding that extensions of the hybrid program would depend on the success of the initial trial period. Accordingly, that summer UConn Library staff submitted to Library and University HR their Alternative Work Arrangement (AWA) schedules for that fall, which ranged from fully in person to fully remote and everything in between. At that time, Library senior leadership requested that Library Administration/Library Research & Assessment design a way to assess, at the close of the fall semester, how the AWA trial period went, including an assessment of productivity during that period. We planned to craft the survey in the early fall and run it at the end of the semester, the end of the University’s trial period for alternative schedules.

THE CHALLENGE

We faced a number of challenges in crafting the survey. Of foremost concern were these questions: How do you constructively ask staff whether they were productive during a period of remote and hybrid work? How do you design a survey to elicit honest feedback when the stakes seem high and staff feel destabilized and insecure? How do you ask real questions about the experience of work during the pandemic while honoring the very personal nature of that experience, during which “home” and “work” lives were unavoidably tangled?

In considering these challenges, we quickly agreed that a survey that over-emphasized “productivity” was not going to elicit useful (or honest) feedback—nor would such a survey be particularly responsive to the lived work-life (life-work?) experience in what was then a very much ongoing pandemic. This was especially likely, given the breadth of experience our staff had been experiencing during the pandemic, where “home work” had to contend with a range of added responsibilities and obstacles, including child and family care, challenging home work

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spaces, unequal technology and access, and both pandemic and non-pandemic related health concerns. We were doubtful that staff were likely to self-identify as “unproductive”—especially if they perceived that the continuation of hybrid work schedules might depend on their answer.¹

BUILDING ON WHAT HAD COME BEFORE

Before we turned to crafting the survey, we looked to two significant precursors for both inspiration and direction: ClimateQUAL and an informal “how are you doing?” survey we had just run in the summer. The survey had emerged from an ad hoc working group on staff experience (during the pandemic). Measured in the number of comments submitted, this completely simple 4-question response mechanism (really just an excel spreadsheet) had elicited a strong response, suggesting that staff were eager to share information about what was going well or not well during the work-from-home period and what concerns they had about “re-entry” if they planned to return to any in-person work. The mechanism for capturing feedback had been completely open for all staff to view (viewable/editable in Sharepoint by any staff member) and had encouraged feedback to be entered in any way that felt comfortable: anonymously by staff themselves, or by supervisors on behalf of staff. The point was to gather the information, not to gather the verbatim words of individuals.

Initially, there had been no plan to even share the results of this feedback device, as it was created to serve the information-gathering needs of a committee. But the results were compelling enough to share, so our assessment librarian ran a quick, loose thematic analysis and sent the results out to staff in an email.

It was advantageous to have the results of this informal survey at hand, as it helped us focus on the topics of greatest concern to staff in the summer prior to the one we were charged to evaluate. The limitations of meeting and other technologies and concerns about decreased communication with colleagues topped the list of concerns. Closely related to that was a worry that remote work was adversely affecting the community and culture of the library or even enabling negative behaviors. Staff expressed minimal concerns about time management or productivity (only a single staff person mentioned that working from home tipped the work-life balance in favor of home life to the detriment of their work time). Some expressed remote work was more equitable across campuses, while a few expressed feeling they were unfairly burdened with the limited in-person work the library required (mostly in access services). In sum, the topics of communication, technology, organizational culture/community, equity of work, work-life balance rose to the top as important to staff as we approached the fall.

Additionally, we looked back a bit further before we created the survey—to ClimateQUAL, which we had just run in mid-late fall 2019 (we were just finishing up data analysis and a draft executive summary as lockdown occurred in mid-March 2020). We had had a strong response (over 70% response rate) to ClimateQUAL, and the survey had underscored what we imagined were still areas of concern less than a year later. Challenges for our organization included organizational withdrawal and psychological empowerment in the workplace. The former measures the degree to which employees engage in actions that distance themselves from an organization; the latter measures the impact individuals feel they have on team/unit work.² Knowing that at least a number of employees felt distanced from—and worked to distance themselves from—the organization was important, as we guessed that the pandemic had likely exacerbated this for those who already felt distanced and created distance for those who hadn’t felt that way before. Empowerment generally felt significant, as the literal and figurative dislocations of the pandemic resulted, we surmised, in a fuzziness around work and impact, especially as communication and other routines were disrupted, if not strained.³

ClimateQUAL highlighted specific “climates” of concern, but running it had also focused us more generally on the “meta” of surveys: the fact that they are meaningful both for the data they produce and, as importantly, for how the question-asking is framed. In other words, methodology is as significant as results. This seems obvious perhaps, but running ClimateQUAL, a study of the perceptions of staff on the health of their organization had required us to slow down and give a lot of thought to the relationship between how one asks questions (and the nature of those questions) and the results that question-asking generates. We had put in a lot of effort, prior to running ClimateQUAL, into sharing information about the survey design and intent and allowing our staff to air concerns about both content and construction during several open meetings. Making sure that the survey felt responsive not only to staff morale and organizational engagement, but also to organizational values around
justice, equity, diversity, access, and inclusion (JEDAI) was critical. Closing the circle, we considered at the end of the ClimateQUAL cycle what and how to share results with staff. In addition to writing an executive summary of significant findings, we also shared the complete results notebook, which included all data charts and almost all textual comments (we had to redact only one).

MEANINGFUL METHODOLOGY

With both of these prior assessments in mind—both in terms of what we wanted to ask and how we should ask it, we decided to approach the survey as a self-assessment of staff experience during the fall along several axes we thought would resonate and invite honest reflection and response: Communication; Productivity & Engagement, and Collaboration & Work Experiences. We had been tasked to address perceived productivity, but by grouping it with work engagement, we hoped to solicit at least some honest feedback. (We were still not confident that any questions about “productivity” itself would generate honest responses—a result of both social desirability bias and a fear of backlash in the form of reduced work flexibility for all staff if too many reported being unproductive). We defined the survey as having the intention of “offer[ing] us insight into how this period of adjustment went so that we may be responsive as an organization.” Key to the survey was that we invited staff to reflect, not only on their own perceived success with these aspects of work, but also on their perception of the organization’s success in bolstering them. In aligning our work self-reflection with broader organizational concerns, we were continuing the logic of the ClimateQUAL survey—that individual experience of an organization was closely intertwined with individual performance and satisfaction, a logic that carries far beyond library or academic contexts. It no longer seems new—but once had to be argued: that an individual’s experience of work matters to the work (and the organization). As one scholar wrote in 2009: “The aim of organizational development is to make work and operations agreeable from the employee's point of view, as this is a key factor in how well staff cope at work, in encouraging them to stay on at work longer, and in making their work more productive. In the long run, it can be difficult to maintain good productivity growth without a favourable development in the QWL [quality of working life]—and the other way round (423).” In this sense, our study of individuals was, again, a study of the library more broadly.

In designing the survey, we focused as much on how we framed the questions as the questions themselves. Although we were not conducting the survey as a part of a formal research project, we composed two fairly lengthy survey descriptions, one in the email invitation to take the survey and the introduction to the survey, which respondents viewed on the survey’s first page. In the email, we tried to hit a balance between formal request and collegial invitation, writing in the subject line: “Invitation to Fall 2021 Survey: Tell Us How the Semester is Going!”—the latter part directly echoing the successful informal feedback mechanism of the summer. In the body of the email, we reminded our colleagues of the survey’s origins: a request from senior leadership to assess the fall transition. We emphasized that the survey was cast broadly: “while the survey captures that work arrangement as a demographic question at the start, the range of questions are more broadly focused on how we each experienced the fall in terms of three areas that are crucial to our work: communication, productivity & engagement, and collaboration & work relationships.” We then took the time to offer transparency about the logistics of the survey: how it would ensure anonymity (saving self-identification in comments), how it was structured, and how we had designed “employee” and “supervisor” sections of the survey to mirror each other. This last design decision was critical and included allowing all staff to view the entire survey, including questions directed at supervisors (a sort of bug on the wall approach). We trusted staff to answer only the part of the survey directed at them—but welcomed staff to view the survey from start to finish. (To clarify: supervisors answered the set of “employee” questions from that perspective, then answered an almost identical set of questions from the perspective of a person supervising other staff.)

Then in the survey itself, we offered a lengthy introduction, which we anchored in a statement about the shared experience of the pandemic:

In the past twenty months, UConn Library staff have experienced a series of work transitions previously unimaginable. Most recently, after a year during which most staff worked remotely,
we commenced fall semester, each of us having defined, with the support of Library leadership, work days that ranged across the organization from fully onsite to fully remote to many variations of hybrid remote/onsite schedules. The guiding principle of this broad endorsement of flexibility around location was that, for most positions, work can be accomplished, and accomplished effectively, regardless of any individual’s location or mode of engagement with others.

[See the end of this paper for the full text of the survey.]

We next explicitly addressed the relationship between the survey and staff Alternative Work Arrangements and an honest reflection on the limitations of the survey in the context of University policy:

Having experienced, not just one but multiple shifts in our way of working, it makes sense now to pause and reflect on this latest transition so that we may reinforce what has gone well and bolster what needs further support. The goal of this survey is to offer staff the chance to assess themselves how the fall semester went. For many (but not all) staff, this period included some form of Alternative Work Arrangement (AWA). For all staff, it was a period of adjustment. This survey considers four areas of work critical to both individual and organizational wellbeing: communication, productivity, engagement, and collaboration/work relationships. This survey is not intended as a referendum on whether AWAs are viable.

This survey is directed at our entire community (regardless of AWA status) and is intended to offer us insight into how this period of adjustment went so that we may be responsive as an organization. How you answer each question is entirely up to you! As with the feedback the Staff Experience Working Group solicited from staff this summer, your responses will help us tell the story of how we’re doing in this time of return, but also continued change and disruption. We appreciate your honesty and self-reflection!

A note about intent: We are likely to continue in a range of work locations and modes this spring; beyond that, we must of course wait for the University’s determination about summer and fall 2022. Although the Library cannot dictate the outcome of those future decisions, we do plan to share with the Provost and University administration the results of this self-study with the hope that it will be a model for how a cycle of transition, reflection, and improvement can ensure we are meeting organizational goals while remaining fluid as a workforce.

The survey opened with a short set of demographic questions about work mode during the fall and prior to the pandemic—the respondent’s status as a supervisor. This was followed by the main survey, which comprised questions grouped by the survey’s main thematic clusters: Communication; Productivity & Engagement; and Collaboration & Work Relationships. Every cluster included an open-ended question allowing respondents to provide comments relative to that theme. The three thematic clusters and questions were repeated in the supervisor section of the survey, with minor question revisions so that questions made sense in that context (e.g. “how easy was it to collaborate” was changed to “how easy did you perceive it to be for your staff to collaborate”). The survey ended with a final open-ended question for additional feedback.

**SHARING IS CARING—RESULTS AND COMMUNICATION**

Like both ClimateQUAL and the summer feedback mechanism, we had an outstanding response to the survey—over 80 staff members across our main and four regional campuses completed the survey, making it a response rate of over 90%. When the survey closed, we assembled Qualtrics-created charts for the scale questions and ran through a quick initial thematic analysis process for the textual responses. We felt it was very important to share results with staff quickly, so just two weeks after the survey closed, in mid-December 2021, we sent out an
email to all staff with some initial take-aways and the scale-question results in chart form. The final executive summary, which took longer to complete, was shared with staff in early February 2022.

Although the focus of this paper is on our intentional approach to method, it’s worthwhile highlighting a few of the results, as they support in general our working assumptions going into the survey design: that staff were still sensitive to issues of empowerment and organizational withdrawal (ClimateQUAL), that they were generally thriving in hybrid work environments, with some concerns around relationship building and maintaining, and communication (echoing the summer feedback)—and that when asked about productivity, staff resoundingly described themselves in positive terms, with very few choosing neutral or negative terms.

The questions we asked about productivity and engagement (clustered together in the survey) had mixed results. Although we expected that questions about productivity elicit mostly positive responses, we had hoped staff might offer a broader range of responses to engagement. However, the data suggested that the two were read as closely aligned, suggesting asking about engagement was tantamount to asking staff whether they were working hard:

![FIGURE 1](image1.png)

**“Considering my work this fall, I would rate my work overall”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neither Productive nor Unproductive</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat productive</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat unproductive</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very productive</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![FIGURE 2](image2.png)

**“How engaged with your work were you during this period?”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very engaged</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mix of Engaged and Unengaged</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat engaged</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unengaged</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat unengaged</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, staff seemed more open to sharing some reservation about their engagement with the organization (see figure 3).

Much more nuanced were staff reflections on the ease of collaborating during this period. Although more staff answered that it was “very easy” to collaborate than other options (45% of responses), a fair number answered that it was “somewhat easy” (33%) or “neither easy nor difficult” (9%). And although only a single respondent described it as “very difficult,” 12% called it “somewhat difficult” (see figure 4).
The most across-the-board responses had to do with maintaining and building relationships with colleagues or other stakeholders. Staff were evenly split between describing maintaining relationships as “very easy” or “somewhat easy” (37% of responses for each answer), which represented the majority of responses. But asked about building new relationships, staff were undecided as a whole, describing it as everything from very difficult to very easy—and everything in between:

### FIGURE 3

“How engaged with the organization (the Library) were you during this period?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very engaged</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mix of engaged and unengaged</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat engaged</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat unengaged</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unengaged</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FIGURE 4

“How easy was it to collaborate with colleagues and others during this period?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very easy</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat easy</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat difficult</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither easy nor difficult</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FIGURE 5

“How easy was it to build new relationships with colleagues and other stakeholders (internal or external) this fall?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat easy</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very easy</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither easy nor difficult</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat difficult</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A very similar pattern appeared when staff were asked about the library’s effectiveness in building community during the fall semester, with no clear pattern emerging from the data.

When supervisors were asked the same questions about their staff, the answers were similar — although supervisors tended generally to describe staff in more positive terms than staff described themselves.

The open-ended question responses added some detail to what the scales showed, although comments were far ranging and therefore sometimes difficult to thematically capture. For example, “communication” appeared many times in the comments, but it referred to a large range of things, from communication tools (tech) to meeting norms, modes, and efficacy of communication. Notable themes included the repeated sentiment that virtual meetings had (finally) created “meeting equity” between the main and regional campuses, that unit-level communication was healthy and had been mostly unimpeded by the move to mostly online meetings, and that organizational-level communication evoked neither strong positive or negative comments (we coded many of these +/-, i.e. neutral or both/and). What emerged most strongly in the comments that wasn’t evident in the scale question results were thoughts about a perceived lack of vision in library leadership broadly and negative perceptions around leadership’s transparency, meaningfulness of communication, and inclusiveness. Finally, new staff self-identified as feeling isolated, a concern about them shared by some of their colleagues. Unsurprisingly, the single most common theme was that work flexibility and the ability to construct a schedule that suited one’s work best (whether this was fully in person/remote or hybrid) had been a boon both to productivity and overall wellbeing.

**SURPRISING NOT SURPRISING: NEVER THE SAME**

No doubt many of the things we describe here as “intentional method” seem obvious: of course we should be transparent in communication around and construction of staff assessments, of course staff won’t feel comfortable answering questions about their productivity, of course one should share results of assessment as fully as one can while still protecting the privacy of respondents. But what we discovered was that, in fact, when we ask questions and share answers, we often take shortcuts—because we’re time-crunched, because we’re constrained by a desire to be politic, because “it’s just information-gathering” for a committee, project, etc. Between us we had crafted and run many surveys. But we’d never crafted a survey at the intersection of a topic and moment (the return to mostly hybrid work after an extended period of remote work caused by a world-changing pandemic).

We didn’t exhaust the possibilities of intentional methods in academic libraries. We could no doubt have gone further in bringing staff into the process of creating the questions in the first place. Regardless of how much heart and head we put into the survey, it resulted from a command from on high and served an administrative
purpose: to assess the success of a University/HR initiative, a test of permanently flexible work mode. We knew right away that it would fail if we sent it out as a “were you able to get work done?” assessment. We worked hard to make it into something that would be meaningful as an opportunity for reflection and would generate data staff would find interesting as a reflection on the organization at large. But in doing so, we undoubtedly cracked open a door that should be opened wider. Added to that is an understanding that what we applied internally should influence us going forward when we ask questions of our students, faculty, and peers. We recently closed LibQUAL, which however useful feels somehow like a step back into an old way of doing things. Put simply: we learned a lot and pushed some boundaries in our method, but we have a lot to learn and many more boundaries to dissolve.

THE SURVEY

Authors note: Although most formatting and all survey flow indicators have been removed from the following (or revised for clarity/brevity), the words of the survey are exactly as they appeared in the Qualtrics original.

Fall 21 Staff Self-Assessment

Introduction

In the past twenty months, UConn Library staff have experienced a series of work transitions previously unimaginable. Most recently, after a year during which most staff worked remotely, we commenced fall semester, each of us having defined, with the support of Library leadership, work days that ranged across the organization from fully onsite to fully remote to many variations of hybrid remote/onsite schedules. The guiding principle of this broad endorsement of flexibility around location was that, for most positions, work can be accomplished, and accomplished effectively, regardless of any individual's location or mode of engagement with others.

Having experienced, not just one but multiple shifts in our way of working, it makes sense now to pause and reflect on this latest transition so that we may reinforce what has gone well and bolster what needs further support. The goal of this survey is to offer staff the chance to assess themselves how the fall semester went. For many (but not all) staff, this period included some form of Alternative Work Arrangement (AWA). For all staff, it was a period of adjustment. This survey considers four areas of work critical to both individual and organizational wellbeing: communication, productivity, engagement, and collaboration/work relationships. This survey is not intended as a referendum on whether AWAs are viable.

This survey is directed at our entire community (regardless of AWA status) and is intended to offer us insight into how this period of adjustment went so that we may be responsive as an organization. How you answer each question is entirely up to you! As with the feedback the Staff Experience Working Group solicited from staff this summer, your responses will help us tell the story of how we're doing in this time of return, but also continued change and disruption. We appreciate your honesty and self-reflection!

A note about intent: We are likely to continue in a range of work locations and modes this spring; beyond that, we must of course wait for the University's determination about summer and fall 2022. Although the Library cannot dictate the outcome of those future decisions, we do plan to share with the Provost and University administration the results of this self-study with the hope that it will be a model for how a cycle of transition, reflection, and improvement can ensure we are meeting organizational goals while remaining fluid as a workforce.

This survey was designed by Susanna Cowan, Coordinator for Library Research & Assessment and Lauren Slingluff, Associate Dean, with feedback from the entire Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Privacy, Confidentiality, and Data Sharing

This survey is anonymous and collects no personal data. Neither browser information nor IP address will be gathered when you take this survey. This survey is for internal purposes only. Summative results of this survey will be shared first with SLT and then with the entire staff. A summary of this self-study will also be shared upward with the Provost and other University administrators.
The survey comprises a section for staff and a section for supervisors. All staff are welcome to view the entire survey, although we ask only supervisors complete the supervisors’ section.

**All-Staff Questions (everyone answers)**

**Directions**
Please answer all questions in this survey with the fall semester (2021) in mind.

**Demographic Questions**
What was your work modality this fall? (If your modality changed, please answer in terms of the modality you worked the longest.)
- In person
- Hybrid (both in person and telecommuting)
- Telecommuting

Describe your fall schedule compared to before the pandemic.
- My schedule was the same (or close to the same) as before the pandemic
- My schedule was different than it was before the pandemic
- I never had a pre-pandemic schedule; I am new to the UConn Library

Do you supervise non-student Library staff? Note: Answering Yes means that, after you answer the survey from the perspective of a staff member, you will be asked a set of questions from the perspective of a supervisor. These questions mirror the “employee” questions. [Feel free to check that section out even if you don’t supervise—we’ve built in a “side door” to that part of the survey so you can exit after reading through the questions!]
- Yes
- No

**Main Survey**
The following questions are for library staff in any role. Supervisors and non-supervisors should complete this part of the survey. The questions ask you to consider from your perspective your current fall ’21 work arrangement. [If you modified your work arrangement at some point this fall, consider the arrangement you have had in place the longest.] These questions will consider 3 main areas of work: communication, productivity/engagement, and collaboration/work relationships.

**Communication**
Considering communication at work in general this fall, I would rate communication overall
- Very effective
- Somewhat effective
- Neither effective nor ineffective
- Somewhat ineffective
- Very ineffective

Thinking of my work this fall, I would rate the ease of communication with others in the service of day-to-day accomplishment of tasks related to my role at the Library
- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult
What has been particularly effective or could be improved with regard to communication? (You are welcome to answer in relation to either general or specific communication contexts.) [Optional—max length 500 characters, approx. 100 words]

**Productivity & Engagement**
Considering my work this fall, I would rate my work overall
- Very productive
- Somewhat productive
- Neither Productive nor Unproductive
- Somewhat unproductive
- Very unproductive

What would help you improve or sustain your productivity?
[Optional—max length 250 characters, approx. 40-50 words]

How engaged with your work were you during this period?
- Very engaged
- Somewhat engaged
- A mix of Engaged and Unengaged
- Somewhat unengaged
- Very unengaged

How engaged with the organization (the Library) were you during this period?
- Very engaged
- Somewhat engaged
- A mix of engaged and unengaged
- Somewhat unengaged
- Very unengaged

What would help you improve or sustain your engagement with your work or the organization?
[Optional—max length 250 characters, approx. 40-50 words]

**Collaboration & Work Relationships**
How easy was it to collaborate with colleagues and others during this period?
- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult

Considering your previous answer, did the fact that your partners in collaboration were themselves working a range of alternate arrangements factor into your answer?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

What would improve or further sustain collaboration moving forward?
[Optional—max. length 250 characters, approx. 40-50 words]
How easy was it to maintain work relationships with colleagues and other stakeholders (internal or external) this fall?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult

How easy was it to build new relationships with colleagues and other stakeholders (internal or external) this fall?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult

How successful was the Library in building a sense of community this fall?

- Very successful
- Somewhat successful
- Neither successful nor unsuccessful
- Unsuccessful
- Very unsuccessful

What would improve or further sustain maintaining and building work relationships and a sense of community going forward?
[Optional—max. length 250 characters, approx. 40-50 words]

Supervisors Section

The following questions are for staff who supervise non-student Library staff. Only supervisors should answer these questions. Supervisors: the following questions ask your perspective on all your direct reports taken together, not on individual staff. Please generalize your responses and answer what best fits, if you consider your staff as a group. These questions will again consider 3 main areas of work: communication, productivity and engagement, and collaboration/work relationships.

To confirm, do you supervise non-student Library staff?
We appreciate your honest response here. If you are not a supervisor, feel free to take a look at the questions before you go! (There will be an “exit” question on each of page of this section.)

- Yes
- No (please skip ahead to the final question)
- No (but I’m still looking around)

Directions for Supervisors Section

Reminder to supervisors: please do not focus on individuals (unless of course you have just a single direct report). Consider all staff who report to you as a group—we’re looking for a general impression of how the fall went for staff from your perspective as a supervisor!

Communication

Considering communication with and between my direct reports in general this fall, I would rate communication overall

- Very effective
- Somewhat effective
Neither effective nor ineffective
Somewhat ineffective
Very ineffective

Considering the work of your staff this fall, how would you describe the ease of their communication with others in the service of day-to-day accomplishment of tasks related to their role(s) at the Library?

Very easy
Somewhat easy
Neither easy nor difficult
Somewhat difficult
Very difficult

From your perspective as a supervisor, what has been particularly effective or could be improved with regard to communication? (You are welcome to answer in relation to either general or specific communication contexts.)

[Optional—max length 500 characters, approx. 100 words]

[For non-supervisors only. Would you like to go to the final question now?]

Yes, please
No thanks, I’m still checking things out

Productivity & Engagement

Considering the work of your staff as a whole, how would you rate their work this fall in terms of productivity?

Very productive
Somewhat productive
Neither Productive nor Unproductive
Somewhat unproductive
Very unproductive

What would help your staff improve or sustain their productivity?

[Optional—max length 250 characters, approx. 40-50 words]

How engaged with their work did you perceive your staff to be during this period?

Very engaged
Somewhat engaged
A mix of Engaged and Unengaged
Somewhat unengaged
Very unengaged

How engaged with the organization (the Library) did you perceive your staff to be during this period?

Very engaged
Somewhat engaged
A mix of engaged and unengaged
Somewhat unengaged
Very unengaged

What in your view would help your staff improve or sustain your engagement with their work or the organization?

[Optional—max length 250 characters, approx. 40-50 words]

[For non-supervisors only. Would you like to go to the final question now?]

Yes, please
No thanks, I’m still checking things out
**Collaboration & Work Relationships**

How easy did you perceive it to be for your staff to collaborate with colleagues and others during this period?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult

Considering your previous answer, did the fact that individuals and groups your staff collaborated with were themselves working a range of alternate arrangements factor into your answer?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

What would improve or further sustain collaboration by your staff moving forward?

[Optional—max. length 250 characters, approx. 40-50 words]

Considering the work of your staff this fall, how easy did you perceive it to be for them to maintain work relationships with colleagues and other stakeholders (internal or external)?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult

How easy did you perceive it was for your staff to build new relationships with colleagues and other stakeholders (internal or external) this fall?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult

What would improve or further sustain your staff’s ability to maintain and build work relationships and a sense of community going forward?

[Optional—max. length 250 characters, approx. 40-50 words]

This is the end of the Supervisor’s Section. On the next page is the final question of the survey (for all staff).

**Final Question—Open Response**

**Directions**

Please answer this final open-ended question by considering the full range of your work experience this fall.

Do you have any additional feedback?

Questions to consider (just suggestions) in your response:

- Were there any practices you found to be really effective in the fall? Were there any practices or procedures that you found to be challenging or ineffective in the fall? Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience of this period in terms of your work or the organization?

[Optional—max length 2500 characters, approx. 500 words]

[End of survey]
NOTES

1. Interestingly, productivity self-assessment is a common tool across work environments, including health care, manufacturing, tech, and corporate environments. A 2018 combined systematic review and interview study of office contexts concludes “self-assessment is the most common measurement tool for workplace productivity evaluation.” And although this approach is subjective and can bias results, it is nonetheless the most commonly used evaluation technique—“particularly regarding influences of factors on productivity (285).” Brandon Bortoluzzi, Daniel Carey, J. J. McArthur, and Carol Menassa, “Measurements of Workplace Productivity in the Office Context: A Systematic Review and Current Industry Insights,” *Journal of Corporate Real Estate* 20, no. 4 (2018): 281-301. [https://doi.org/10.1108/JCRE-10-2017-0033](https://doi.org/10.1108/JCRE-10-2017-0033)

Our “gut” on this, however, was shaped less by existing research and more by our experience with recent in-house assessment work and our read of an incredibly unique shared experience (the pandemic).

2. Association of Research Libraries, “Core Scales” [ClimateQUAL]. [https://www.climatequal.org/about/concepts/core-scales](https://www.climatequal.org/about/concepts/core-scales)

3. Although not the focus of this paper, the relationship between organizational climate, as measured in ClimateQUAL, and diversity has been made ably by a number of scholars. Of note is the study by Morris, Kyrillidou, and Puente, who offer a detailed statistical analysis of multiple years of aggregated ClimateQUAL data, highlighting variations in organizational climate scores along demographic lines (see pages 131-47 in particular). See Shaneka Morris, Martha Kyrillidou, and Mark A. Puente, “Differences and Equity: a Reflective Analysis of ClimateQUAL Demographics and Organizational Culture,” in *ClimateQUAL: Advancing Organizational Health, Leadership, and Diversity in the Service of Libraries*, ed. Charles B. Lowry (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 121-54.

4. Social desirability bias is a type of response bias that describes when a respondent denies or downplays what they perceive are socially undesirable traits, behaviors, etc. It’s not a stretch to imagine staff would be hesitant to describe themselves as unproductive at work, even without the added worry that it would have direct, negative consequences on their work situation.