

EMOTION IN THE LIBRARY WORKPLACE

ADVANCES IN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

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ADVANCES IN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION AND
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PREFACE

INTRODUCTION: EMOTIONS IN THE LIBRARY WORKPLACE

Having now served as the series editor for ALAO for two years, I can say that the volume on Emotions in the Library Workplace struck a chord with our contributors and editorial board in a way that no previous volume has done. The topic brought us many fine submissions, and our board engaged with them deeply, delivering feedback and comments to these authors at a level I had not seen before. Perhaps this is due to the deep importance of the topic – emotions really do matter in our work environments. Perhaps it is because librarianship is often seen as caring work, where there is an expectation of emotional engagement. A large part of it, of course, is due to the authors themselves and their captivating takes on a topic that still remains underexplored in our profession.

We begin the volume with a primer on emotions in the workplace by Miriam L. Matteson, Volume Editor and Associate Professor at the Kent State University School of Library and Information Science. Miriam has been writing, presenting, and researching on the topic for years and provides us with the ideal starting point for placing the following chapters into the existing broader context of research on emotions in the workplace.

With the next few chapters, we examine the role of emotion in the library workplace from a more personal perspective. Brian Quinn, Social Science Librarian at Texas Tech University, writes about the potential of using mindfulness practices to regulate emotions on the part of library workers both within the organization and when working with library users. He provides a good overview into the research on mindfulness alongside practical approaches for individuals or managers to take within their own workspaces.

Next, Barbara M. Sorondo, Health Sciences Librarian at Florida International University, looks at how affect, personality and job satisfaction can be assessed in library employees and how these factors are related and interact within the library workplace. She provides insight as to how measuring these factors within your own library may help administrators customize employee resources to best meet unique needs.

This is followed by Ruth Wallach's chapter examining how librarians think about the value of their work. Wallach, the Associate Dean for Public Services at the University of Southern California's USC Libraries, offers an interesting examination of how librarians situate themselves within the process of inquiry

and scholarship, and how librarians thus construct their professional competence and authority. Understanding these concepts and processes can help administrators better provide for librarian satisfaction and professional growth.

Amongst the Editorial Board when discussing this potential volume, there were many people interested in a chapter about avoiding burnout which Margaret Hogarth, Information Resources and Acquisitions Team Leader for the Claremont Colleges Library, provides for us. Her chapter presents a tool to identify and quantify activities that can help individuals reduce burnout, which will be of great value to library administrators both for their organizations and also for their own use.

Turning toward more technical issues, Lindsey Reno of the University of New Orleans and Megan Lowe of the University of Louisiana-Monroe write on the emotions surrounding deselection, or weeding, in the library. One of the more fraught tasks of the library is addressed alongside strategies to help library workers better cope with the process both within the library and regarding the outward perception of weeding among library users.

Using emotional–social intelligence as a framework for reference and user services librarians’ competencies and traits is the subject of the next chapter, by Terri Summey, who serves as Coordinator of Reference Services at Emporia State University Libraries and Archives. Through her chapter we learn that reference and user service librarians, in a small-scale survey, tend to score in the mid- to high range on the Bar-On model of emotional-social intelligence. She suggests that the competencies and traits identified by library professional associations like the American Library Association for reference and user services librarians back up this observation and that a focus on emotional intelligence can help enhance librarians working in these areas.

From here the volume focuses on ways that emotions in the library affect management work. We begin with a chapter by Deborah Gaspar, Director of Public Services at Rowan University, and Kelly Hayden, a recent graduate of Rutgers University’s Graduate School of Communication and Information, where the authors examine generational theory as it pertains to legacy practices. Legacy practices, the “we’ve always done it this way” of libraries, can be a challenge for managers to overcome, but through the lens of generational theory this chapter presents ways to understand and honor practices while making positive changes.

Improving internal employee interactions is the focus of the next chapter, written by Wendy C. Doucette and Rebecca L. Tolley from East Tennessee State University. They look at civility initiatives within the library workplace as a method for improving employee interactions, and present a mix of strategies that can be implemented within the reader’s library to develop and improve organizational culture and workplace morale.

Another practical tool for improving organizational culture is offered in Kabel Nathan Stanwicks’ chapter on communication agreements. The Head of Access Services at the University of Albany Libraries, Stanwicks discusses what

communication agreements are and gives an overview of the process as well as how to assess the efficacy of agreements once implemented. This approach can be very beneficial for those in a diverse library workplace with many different styles and means of communication.

Emotions in the library workplace also affect the library administrators, and Jolene M. Miller from the University of Toledo presents library administrators with the concept of intentional reflective practice as a way to become mindful of emotions in their day to day work, and as a technique to improve emotional self-regulation. This can help readers reduce their stress on the job and accomplish more within and for their libraries.

To wrap the volume up, Miriam L. Matteson returns with an afterword outlining next steps for exploring emotions in the library workplace. She offers us suggestions on how to broaden and deepen the inquiry both in research and in practice. One of my favorite pieces of advice is to not be afraid to get messy, and this advice definitely resonates in discussions around emotion in the library workplace. We've seen through these chapters that no matter how vulnerable it may make us feel, a focus on emotional awareness directly benefits the workplace in improved job satisfaction and performance, in better communication and interactions, and in managing change and moving forward in a dynamic professional environment. Readers of this volume will find value in these discussions both in the immediate ability to apply tools and techniques as well as food for thought for future research and practice in the library profession.

Samantha Hines
Series Editor