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**“So what made you decide to become a school librarian?” – reasons people currently working in New Zealand school libraries give for their choice of employment.**

**by**

**Lynn Walker**

Submitted to the School of Information Management,

Victoria University of Wellington

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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## Abstract

School librarians are part of a period of revolutionary technological change in the information profession. It's an exciting time to be a school librarian, but there are concerns about possible shortages in the profession in the not too far distant future, as the 'baby-boomer' generation currently working in schools approaches retirement. In order to attract and retain suitably qualified new recruits to the profession, this study examines the reasons why people choose this area of librarianship. Using Herzberg's motivation theory in the world of work as a framework, nine librarians currently employed in secondary schools were interviewed about their reasons for choosing school librarianship as a profession.

This qualitative study concludes that for most women school librarianship is a conscious lifestyle choice, as the availability of flexible 'hours' offers superior work / life balance. Other factors are the environment, plus the people, and the job itself which offers autonomy, variety and immensely satisfying work. The two major sources of dissatisfaction are pay and conditions of employment.

**KEYWORDS:** School librarians, recruitment, secondary schools, motivations, job satisfaction

## Research outline: Introduction and background

Heading into the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, school librarians continue to be part of a period of revolutionary technological change in the information profession. It's an exciting time to be a school librarian as new ways of reading, managing, creating and sharing content are thrust upon us almost daily. Instead of being consumed by technological change, many school librarians have risen to the challenges and are having a satisfying and rewarding time creating new ways to present, distribute and share information. Some school librarians have been so outstanding in their efforts they have become technology leaders in the New Zealand school library community and are inspiring role models for the rest of us to follow.

The pace of technological change in recent times has been phenomenal in the information world, and this combined with changes in the school curriculum such as inquiry learning, and changes in the way curriculum is delivered to students, have lead to the role of the school librarian undergoing revolutionary change. The 21<sup>st</sup> century school librarian tends more toward being a technology leader and has a more teacher focused collaborative impetus, than the 20<sup>th</sup> century librarian model in schools. This is how school librarianship is described in the following American article. Note that a school library media specialist in the U.S.A. and Australia is a trained teacher with complementary librarianship qualifications.

“The work of the school library media specialist has the potential of being among the most complex of specializations in the world of information as school library media specialists are called upon to be master teachers,

instructional consultants, technology specialists, and leaders and administrators along with all of the traditional functions within librarianship, including both user and technical services” (Solomon, 2009, as cited in Solomon & Rathbun-Grubb, 2009, p.246).

And this rather lighter description of a librarian, found on Seth Godin’s blog for 16 May, 2011, entitled “The future of the library”, which could equally be a description of a school librarian: “a librarian is a data hound, a guide, a sherpa and a teacher. The librarian is the interface between reams of data and the untrained but motivated user.”

So what is the make-up of this sub-speciality of librarianship? In New Zealand, as in most countries, it is an almost exclusively female dominated sector, many of whom are mothers, most are in the older age bracket, forty years or older, and many have come to school librarianship either from other sectors of librarianship, or from teaching, or by “accidentally” happening upon librarianship, as a second or third career (Bosseau & Martin, 1995, p.198).

What is of concern is the fact that large numbers of school librarians from the baby-boomer years are coming close to retirement. According to American research (Shannon, 2008, p.210), there will be a “wave of retirements among the nation’s librarians” between 2010 and 2020. If similar demographics exist in New Zealand, there may in the near future be a smaller pool of library and information science professionals’ from which to recruit school librarians.



## Purpose of study

Because of concerns about possible future shortages of school librarians, as it is acknowledged we are a 'greying' profession, it is worthwhile investigating the reasons why people are attracted to school librarianship; what motivates them to enter the profession; what keeps them motivated while they are in it, and what could be done about the de-motivating factors, that either cause people to leave the profession, or not choose to enter it in the first place.

The library profession, library educators and employers can't assist with recruitment efforts unless they understand what motivates individuals to choose school librarianship. Knowing what motivates people to enter a profession must assist with recruitment efforts. Besides discovering how to attract suitably qualified people to the field, additionally, employers might be persuaded to rectify de-motivating factors, or conditions which discourage people from entering the school library profession.

There have been very few studies specifically examining the reasons why people choose to enter school librarianship and given that this profession has undergone such radical change in recent years, I felt a qualitative exploration of reasons and motivations from a New Zealand viewpoint would be useful.

## Theoretical framework

I have approached this project from two theoretical standpoints. One is a feminist line of enquiry which seeks answers to two questions. The first being 'why is working with children, nurturing roles, and work with a high customer service

orientation, so called “women’s work”, so devalued generally in our society?’ We have a problem in librarianship, teaching and other professions in that

“the pay, status, career opportunities, and working conditions in these occupations are generally lower for both the men and women in them than they are in occupations requiring similar levels of education and responsibility but not typed as women’s work” (Stromberg & Harkess, 1988, as cited in Hildenbrand, 1989, p.153).

The second question is ‘why do well-qualified women continue to self-select into poorly paid roles?’ What factors are at work here?

The second theoretical framework is Herzberg’s motivation theory in the world of work. My semi-structured, open-ended questions in my qualitative interviews were roughly grouped with reference to Herzberg’s six principal motivators, the sources of job satisfaction in the world of work, and also, contrastingly, Herzberg’s ten ‘hygiene’ or ‘maintenance’ factors, often sources of job dissatisfaction. For reference his list of the six ‘motivators’ are:

1. Achievement
2. Recognition for achievement
3. Work itself
4. Responsibility
5. Advancement
6. Possibility of growth

and his list of the ten ‘hygiene’ or ‘maintenance factors’ are:

1. Supervision
2. Company policy and administration
3. Working conditions
- 4-6. Interpersonal relations with peers, subordinates and superiors
7. Status
8. Job security
9. Salary
10. Personal life (Herzberg, 1966, p.95-96)

Herzberg's theory is mentioned further in my review of the literature related to this research project.

Added to Herzberg's 'motivators', and 'hygiene' or 'maintenance' factors were additional questions related to recruitment and retention in school librarianship.

## Research questions

The focus of this study was:

- what are the reasons given by people currently working in New Zealand secondary school libraries for their choice of employment?
- what were the motivations for choosing school librarianship as a career?
- what factors attracted them to school librarianship?

In terms of recruitment, to replace the ranks of baby boomer school librarians who are nearing retirement, what can we change in the current set-up, to attract

and retain good staff of the mould and make up we want for 21<sup>st</sup> century learners? How can we entice the qualified people we want as our 21<sup>st</sup> century school librarians into our schools?

## Problem statement

Also in terms of recruitment, the 'problem' for school librarianship has a number of elements. These are:

- that school librarianship is a 'greying' profession; according to recent estimates there will be a large number of retirements from this sector in the next ten years or so, which makes recruitment even more pressing. "Recruiting young librarians to school librarianship emerged as a top concern of school library leaders who attended the 2006 *School Library Journal* Summit in Chicago" (Oleck, 2006, as cited in Shannon, 2008, p. 211).
- that school librarianship is undoubtedly a feminised occupation and as such suffers from the usual low salaries, low status, and insecure conditions of work.
- that there is an ever increasing gap between the sophisticated knowledge, skills and educational requirements wanted by the employer and the meagre remuneration offered for these skills. Anecdotally, advertised vacancies in New Zealand school libraries are taking longer to fill.

- that school librarianship, as does librarianship in general, suffers from an image problem and a lack of diversity. “I thought about the stereotypical librarian: older woman with glasses and a bun. I didn’t want to go into a profession where everyone was closer to my mom’s age” (Lau Whelan, 2003, p. 53).
- “that the librarian is responsible for every aspect of the total library program. Many times this is a one-person operation without any additional staffing” (Howard, 2005, p.24). Being sole-charge can be a daunting task. On the other hand, many of my participants relished the opportunity to be in charge of everything.
- that career development opportunities within school librarianship are limited; it can be seen as a career “cul-de-sac” ( McInroy, 1990, p. 23).
- that the hierarchical nature of education and schools means that the teaching profession is in charge of telling the librarianship profession what to do and how to do it. This refers to many schools having a Teacher with Library Responsibility, with allocated paid Management Units for the privilege, and / or, the ‘Support Staff’ versus ‘teacher’ divide. Placed in this situation, the school librarian often has to prove or win acceptance as a co-professional with the teaching body.

Despite all of the above it is evident from the literature and from my own findings that school librarians generally experience a very high level of job satisfaction.

## Review of the literature

Two studies stand out from the rest as having particular relevance to my research project. The first is by Donna M. Shannon (2008) in her article entitled “School librarianship: career choice and recruitment”. The first of Shannon’s research questions was “what are the reasons school library media specialists give for choosing a career in school librarianship? Are there differences for those with classroom teaching experience and those without experience as classroom teachers?” (p. 212)

Shannon addressed the research questions above, firstly by surveying 275 University of South Carolina School of Library and Information Science school media certification program completers, the cohort of 1997 to 2003, and secondly through focus group interviews with “fourteen women representing a mix of current students and program completers, who did not have classroom teaching experience” (Shannon, 2008, p. 217). Of the 174 useable surveys completed, notable characteristics that emerged in this American context were that:

- 168 respondents were white
- “only nine of the 174 respondents were males”
- “the average age of respondents at the time they began the University of South Carolina school media preparation program was 34.4” (p. 213).

When “asked explicitly about their motivation for pursuing school media certification” (p. 214), twenty of the 123 respondents with experience as classroom teachers stated they were looking for a way out of the classroom.

- “I was becoming burned out as a classroom teacher and was looking for a change without leaving education” (p. 214)

Typical responses from non-teachers were:

- “It is a career in which I can make a difference in the lives of children”.
- “I love children’s literature and I love working with children. A school library media specialist job seemed the perfect way to combine those two loves.” (p. 215)

Common reasons for choosing school librarianship were the “family friendly” nature of the school calendar:

- “Prefer the school schedule – summers off, no weekends/nights – as opposed to a public library schedule.” (p. 216)

The focus group interviews were held “to understand more about how non-teachers discover school librarianship as a possible career and what motivates them to this path”. (p. 217) Shannon (2008) clustered her results from these interviews around three themes; “the personal”, “the practical” and “the passion”.

A personal contact, most often a librarian, “accounted for how twelve of the fourteen focus group participants became aware of school librarianship as a possible career”. (p. 218)

“The practical” was also a consideration. “Nine of the fourteen were mothers with school-aged children; three of the remaining five were young women who mentioned their plans for starting a family. Several pointed out that having the same schedule as their children impacted their decision to pursue this career path. Spending evenings and summers with children was important to them. Three of the participants were married to teachers and looked forward to spending summers with their spouses.” (p. 218)

Finally, “the passion”; reasons associated with choosing a “personally rewarding” and satisfying career:

- “I really like it when a child comes either for a pleasure book or to find something on the Internet or whatever. They have a request and I am able to help them find what they are looking for. It’s the greatest experience.”
- “I just remember going to the library and someone always being nice there, and I thought that if every person had a good librarian that they would have this love for books that I didn’t develop, unfortunately, early enough.”
- “I agree with what everyone says about the flexibility because it works for me but at some point you have to have a passion for it and you’ve got to want to do it and you have to have a love for people or children or books or something, to do it.” (Shannon, 2008, p. 219)

In summary “most of the non-teachers are women looking for second careers and interested in a work schedule that matches that of family members.” (p. 223)



In fact sometimes happening upon school librarianship in almost 'accidental' fashion (Bosseau & Martin, 1995, p. 198).

Shannon's recommendations for recruitment for the future based on this research are:

- "recruit the "best and brightest" teachers and under graduates"
- "be alert to those re-entering the work force or seeking a career change"
- "invest in the future by starting early: target secondary school students"
- "invest in the future by educating employers: target school principals"
- "challenge negative stereotypes and promote rewards associated with the job" (p. 225-226)

It should also be noted that participants in Shannon's study "found the variety of the job and the opportunity to work with both children and adults as positive aspects of the profession" (Shannon, 2008, p.226).

The second study especially relevant to my research project is that by Stephanie A. Jones (2010) entitled "The occupational choice of school librarians". In this wholly qualitative study Jones used Savickas' (2005) career construction theory as a framework for understanding the data that came out of her 'life story interviews' (p. 166).

Her article discusses how various influences over a 'life course' shaped the vocational personalities of the participants and lead them to be attracted to a career in school librarianship. Jones interviewed in depth five graduate students who had selected the occupation of school librarian. Her research questions were tied in with the 'life story' theme, for example, her first guiding question was, "How have the participants reached this decision point in their lives, both personally and professionally?"(p. 168)

When Jones (2010, p. 174) discusses her data analysis she identifies codes and themes which emerged as common to *her* study, Shannon's (2008), and my own. Those that were relevant to my study were the following; "career changers, librarian mentors, prior library work experiences, reading, library experiences, altruism-service, desire to work with children, flexibility of work schedule, emotional distance, and the 'vocational personality' of the participants", (Jones, 2010, p. 174).

Interestingly one of her recommendations for future research states that "further exploration should include participants who are working school librarians and library students attending a variety of institutions" (p. 183), which is almost the make-up of my participant population.

Jones's (2010) use of Savickas' (2005) career construction theory builds on the various psychological and developmental theories attempting to explain work choices. One of which is Donald E. Super's (1957) "self-concept"; following on from which is the concept of "work values". According to this research, we

“tend to select work roles that fit our self-concept but are specifically also matched to our value system”...”Selecting an occupation consonant with our values consequently contributes to our sense of work satisfaction. Research in this area has shown that social values, such as the value of altruism, are powerful drives in women when they are selecting work” (Brown, 2002; Davey, 2001; Davey & Lalande, 2004, as cited in Woodfield, 2007, p.22-23).

Hence, it can be argued, many women choose careers in occupations with a strong service ethic, such as librarianship, nursing, teaching and social work.

Other literature either touches very lightly on how the choice of school librarianship was made, (Weihs,1999), (Taylor, Perry, Barton & Spencer, 2010), or discusses various issues in school librarianship such as the “retirement crisis”, (Howard, 2005), or the dearth of young school librarians, (Lau Whelan, 2003), or whether school librarians also need to be certified as teachers,(Swigger,1999).

McInroy (1990) discusses how she entered school librarianship in Australia and then gives her reasons for leaving the profession, with the arresting title, “Regrets? I’ve had but few – since I left librarianship”. Much of the literature touches on aspects of school librarianship, ranging from “The personality traits of individuals in different specialities of librarianship” (Williamson, Pemberton & Lounsbury, 2008), to job satisfaction (Houdyshell, Robles & Hua, 1999; Kenney, 2009), to the impact of the relationship you have with your school principal, (Farmer, 2007; Lau, 2002; Shannon, 2009), to leadership in school libraries, (Coatney, 2010), to career choice; how to go about becoming a school librarian, and finally, to issues of recruitment and retention in the library profession generally (Bosseau & Martin, 1995; Kyrillidou, 2006; Bishop & Janczak, 2007; Morgan, Farrar & Owens, 2009).

Librarians generally experience a very high level of job satisfaction. The *School Library Journal* Job Satisfaction Survey 2008 which was emailed to 15,987 subscribers received 2,253 responses, of which 1,681 were school librarians and 582 were public librarians, and Brian Kenney’s analysis “shows that most librarians are crazy about their jobs” (Kenney, 2009, p. 28). The “satisfaction top five” in school librarianship were:

- “working with young people” (35%)
- “connecting kids to reading and lifelong learning” (18%)
- “assisting students / faculty / customers” (17%)
- “good people to work with” (10%)
- “collaborating with teachers” (4%) (Kenney, 2009, p. 29).

“The opportunity to work with young people was the main pleasure, or as one school librarian put it, the joy “of interacting with kids!” The “participants relished the variety in their workdays and the level of creativity their jobs afforded them” (Kenney, 2009, p. 29).

Frederick Herzberg’s (1966) theories on job satisfaction fit well with the survey responses being discussed. His two factor theory distinguishes between **motivators**, such as the work itself, recognition for achievement, responsibility and the possibility of growth, and **hygiene factors**, which are extrinsic to the work itself, such as working conditions, interpersonal relations with peers, subordinates and superiors, status, job security, and salary. The presence of motivators gives job satisfaction and intrinsic rewards, and hygiene factors need to be catered for to avoid job dissatisfaction, or a sense of “unfairness in the environment” (Herzberg, 1966, p. 104). Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction can exist at the same time, as positives and negatives of varying strengths.

It appears that in school librarianship at present, at least for those in the job, the strength of satisfaction in the job itself outweighs the two major sources of dissatisfaction, salaries, and lack of recognition. Of course those who are most dissatisfied have probably left the profession.

Morgan, Farrar and Owens (2009) examined data from 1,903 working library and information science graduate respondents of LIS programs in North Carolina. They concluded from the data they analysed that women are more likely than men to be influenced by intrinsic rewards (e.g., “like working with people,”) and “to prefer intrinsic qualities in a job” (e.g., “feeling of doing something meaningful”, “occupation in which one can help others”). (p.212). Their findings show that women place higher importance on the need for work-family balance and flexibility in employment, such as “flexible scheduling, part-time options” and “job-sharing” .

“As a predominantly female occupation with large numbers of older workers, library and information science is faced with an increased need for flexible and family-friendly employment options” (Morgan, Farrar & Owens, 2009, p. 212).

One of the major attractions of school librarianship is that it offers many opportunities for just such family-friendly employment options. In New Zealand many school librarians are able to job share, and / or, work part-time. These ‘bonuses’ can come at a price however.

“Explanations for occupational sex segregation include women’s inability to accumulate tenured work experience due to their greater reliance on nonstandard work arrangements such as part-time work, temporary work, and job sharing” (Morgan, Farrar & Owens, 2009, p. 195).

Part-timers are often considered to take their work less 'seriously' than full timers and in the field of education these judgements are being made in the school hierarchy by women of other women. You can lose significant 'credibility' by going part-time. It is definitely advantageous to use the benefits of part-time work for certain periods of one's 'life-course', but it can take years of full-time work to recover the earning potential lost while working part-time to care for young children.

Nonetheless, women continue to self-select into poorly paid, but worthwhile occupations such as school librarianship. School librarianship is "socially important, intrinsically rewarding and accorded rhetorical value by the community" (McInroy, 1990, p.28). All well and good, but McInroy goes on to query "why is (this) important work so poorly paid? Are the links between women and low pay inevitable?" (p.28).

Bob Berkowitz, (U.S.), co-author of the Big6 approach to teaching, (an information and technology literacy model and curriculum),

"advocates embarking on a new marketing campaign that includes more nationwide seminars about the impact of school librarians on improving student learning and stepping up recruitment at graduate and undergraduate schools of education. Most important, he says, is strengthening the links between library schools and schools of education" (Lau Whelan, 2003, p.54-55).

Jody Howard (2005) in her article on school librarians and the retirement crisis says that

“as members of the library profession, we must continue our efforts to recruit school librarians who will be leaders in our schools; we must make academic programs available to all interested persons wanting to receive this training; and we must promote the value of our school library positions, illustrating the link between our roles and the academic achievement of students” (Howard, 2005, p. 26).

Taylor, Perry, Barton and Spencer’s (2010) study of library school students at the University of Alabama supports the marketing and recruitment efforts suggested above, as

“only a little more than half of the 2009 students said they knew what subfield they wanted to pursue when starting their LIS studies.” ...”Most LIS students have open minds about speciality tracks as they embark on their careers, even though some pursue very specialized career goals” (p.40). Another interesting factor is that “the majority of LIS students are more concerned with the specific functions of librarianship than with the prestige, compensation, or other benefits that might influence a decision to pursue another, more high-profile career” (Taylor et al, 2010, p. 41).

In conclusion, from the evidence, most school librarians find their work extremely rewarding most of the time, and “would recommend it enthusiastically or with some reservations” (Kenney, 2009, p. 31). School librarianship appears to appeal to “mid-life career switchers” (Kenney, 2009, p.31) and to those librarians for whom child or elder care is a priority for a period in their lives. The family friendly opportunities to work part-time and the convenience of working within school terms make for a less stressful work / life balance for working mothers.



However, there is a “lack of diversity in school and youth librarianship” and “a large swath of the profession (is) on the verge of retirement” (Kenney, 2009, p. 31), so there is a need to explore all possible ways to attract new recruits to the profession. Some of the suggestions that came out of the survey data from the study of University of Alabama MLIS students (2009) were that;

- “the library profession must target students earlier in their academic careers, while still in college or even high school. School librarians can guide students onto the library career path.” (Taylor, Perry, Barton & Spencer, 2010, p. 45)
- “enthusiasm can be catching!”...“library students and library employees either anticipate or report high levels of job satisfaction” – “exude enthusiasm for your profession” (Taylor et al, 2010, p. 46)
- “stress books and technology”...“LIS students look forward to using information technologies as part of their jobs...”stress not only books but also the chance to work with databases, virtual reference services, new types of productivity software, Web 2.0 applications for libraries, and other technologies” (Taylor et al, 2010, p. 46).

School librarianship offers autonomy, enormous variety in job functions, the opportunity to work with children, adults, and even the wider community, plus the chance to take part in lots of ‘fun stuff’ in the life of a school.

Factors which have not been discussed in depth in the literature with relation to school librarianship are two of Herzberg's motivators, recognition for achievement, and advancement. Advancement is apparently more important to men than to women, and the ability to balance work and family responsibilities is apparently more important to women than men. Intrinsic rewards, altruistic tendencies, volunteering, and 'a job where I could make a difference', are more important to and are more often associated with women in the workforce than men. However, the lack of opportunity for clear advancement in a school librarianship career, (the career 'cul-de-sac') and often the frustrating lack of recognition for achievement, are two definite dissatisfactions, which come within Herzberg's six first-level motivating factors.

Exploring these factors and all of Herzberg's 'motivators' and 'hygiene' factors as they apply to school librarianship, by means of qualitative interviews with practising school librarians, would help in a small way to fill a gap in the current research. This is what I have attempted to do in the following study.

### Limitations of study

With a fixed time period in which to conduct this research project, time was limited with respect to the number of participants who could be interviewed. I found I had reached saturation in the responses after interviewing nine participants, for approximately forty-five minutes to one hour, per interview.

Other limitations were those of age, diversity and gender. Unfortunately I had no male interviewees and all of my participants were white, female, and over the age of forty.

I did not interview anyone who had left school librarianship. Exploring the reasons why people leave this field could be the focus for another study, although some reasons become obvious in the data analysis of this research.

This study is also restricted to secondary school librarians within a small geographic area, Wellington.

We also lack a proper statistical profile of our school library profession in New Zealand. It would be useful, for reference, to have statistics on the number(s) of school librarians in schools, and their qualifications, etc.

## Research design – Methodology

I took an inductive, interpretivist approach to the research question “what are the reasons given by people currently working in New Zealand secondary school libraries for their choice of employment?”

Qualitative, semi-structured, in depth interviews, was the appropriate method for this investigation, as I wanted my participants “to talk about a set of questions or topics in their own way” (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 147). Most of the articles in the literature review used variations of the survey method, and this was because the aim was to gather measurable and comparable data, such as salary, type of library, gender and so on.

## Research sample

Out of the population of New Zealand school librarians, with the restrictions of time and resources I chose a purposive sampling approach, limited to Wellington secondary school librarians. Key-informants were selected from personal acquaintance through professional associations, and I did attempt to select a variety of associated schools; single-sex, co-ed, high and low decile, private and state schools.

The sample size for my semi-structured, one to one, open-ended interviews came to nine participants.

The initial approach to the interviewees was by an email letter of introduction, with some information about the research project and a request for a confidential, anonymous, up to one hour long interview, at a date, place and time to be arranged with the interviewee.

Everyone I approached was willing to participate and colleagues and peers have been very interested in the outcome of this research.

## Data analysis techniques

My participants all accepted having their interviews digitally recorded, and I travelled to each participant's place of work, where the interviews took place within their working day at a mutually agreed date and time. We tried to find a quiet, private area of the library where we would be uninterrupted, (usually the library workroom.)

This was difficult sometimes unless there was another member of staff available to look after the students and / or teachers, and one librarian actually closed the library so she could talk to me without being interrupted. I interviewed two participants in their school staff room, where unfortunately we coincided with morning tea time, and I worried that my participants might be inhibited in their responses by the proximity of their work colleagues. Most of the interviews took no longer than an hour, but one or two stretched towards two hours.

As well as the digital recording, I made sure I took detailed notes of what was being said while the interviews were taking place, highlighting aspects I thought were important at the time to refer back to. I transcribed all nine interviews in full, (although I mainly left out the interviewer's voice). I spent a considerable time re-listening to the interviews, re-reading all the transcripts and went back to the textbooks for advice on how to begin to make sense of the data.

I followed the advice of Corbin & Strauss (2008) and went through all my transcripts again, dividing the data into chunks and writing reflective, 'sense-making' memos about each section. At the end of this exercise themes were definitely emerging from the data, but I felt the need to break things down even more.

Using my interview questions which were roughly grouped into sections according to attractions, influence(r)s, satisfactions, then Herzberg's 'motivators', 'hygiene' factors, and issues for recruitment and retention, I began to code all of the responses to each question, using codes derived from the data, or from the literature review. Working through my data in this way helped me fully

understand the process of grouping codes into categories, and then on into themes or concepts.

The presentation of my qualitative findings, which follows next, is as Pickard suggests, a “descriptive narrative used to tell our audience what we have found”, building upon and using the previous research literature, the research questions, and the theory as a framework to tell the “story” (Pickard, 2007, p. 247).

## Findings

The first findings to be presented are the findings which are the focus of the research project; “what factors *attracted* people to school librarianship?” These are followed by the findings related to ‘*influence(r)s*’ and the research question “what was the motivation for choosing school librarianship as a career?” And the final research question “what are the reasons given by people currently working in New Zealand secondary school libraries for their choice of employment?” - describing among other things the *satisfactions* in the role of school librarian.

### What attracted you to school librarianship?

Standing out head and shoulders above the other ‘attractions’ are; ‘the hours’, being able to work part-time, and the holidays. Seven out of the nine participants all mentioned ‘the hours’ and working ‘part-time’ as major attractions:

- “the idea suited me very well...because it was part-time and I got the school holidays off.”

- “my children came over (to New Zealand) aged 12 and 14 and I thought, ‘a good way to settle them in’, I’ll have school holidays and I can be with them, and we can settle in as a family and this will be a good start.”
- “the main reason would have to be the hours. Because I had young children.”
- “I had young children, so holidays was another big reason, as I was finding working **all** the time, even though it was part-time, you had to work through the holidays. It’s difficult when you’ve got young children, because you do want to be with them.”
- “the hours suited me” ...”I still had an eight year old and I still wanted to be there when she left and home when she got home”.

And this participant sums it all up: “the hours were very good, and this is why a lot of women, I think, end up going into school librarianship, because the hours were good, holidays were off, I was home at the same time as the children, and so it seemed a good thing to do in the meantime. The trouble is, I’m still here! But I enjoyed it and it’s been a good thing to do with my girls.”

The next most common factors were what Savickas describes in the literature as “the vocational personality”, that is attracted to librarianship, (Savickas, 2005, as cited in Jones, 2010, p. 169), and ‘the love of reading’:

- “the idea suited me very well, a) because it was a library and I love reading and books”
- “I wanted to be a librarian”

- “I had always wanted to be a librarian, even though I wasn’t before I got married, I had always thought it would be a really nice job to have.”

The next most popular factors were a desire to ‘work with people’ and / or, a liking for teenagers, and an appreciation of young adult literature:

- “I get the best of both worlds, I get to work with books, people, and I get holidays off. So that’s why I went for the job.”
- “I really enjoyed the literature... I’ve always kept up with it and through my kids have kept up with children’s and young adult literature, so it’s an interest, and I really enjoyed my kids friends when they were teenagers and I’d left, always in the back of my mind, that I’d like to go and work in a school library.”
- “Working with a lot of people; you know, I like contact with people, so I knew there would be a lot of that in a school. I always enjoyed reading my children’s books when they were growing up, I was interested in it. ... and I had done the Services to Children & Young Persons paper, which I enjoyed.”
- “I also really like young adult literature. I enjoy reading the books.”

Another factor of interest is the appeal of doing something new and different, with new challenges, for mid-career, experienced librarians. This well qualified librarian, who has worked at her school library for over ten years, stated as the number one attraction:

- “I had never done it before”.



And another experienced librarian, who has an M.A., and the M.L.I.S., said:

- “the job just happened to come along when I was looking for a job basically, and it appealed. It did appeal. I suppose they made it sound interesting.”

Other attractions, are the fact that part-time work gives you the time and flexibility for other interests, such as study, or less ‘hours’ gives you some time and energy for other responsibilities in your life:

- “it was good to be in a library while I was studying, as I started here without any library experience... So, the hours, and the experience to go with my study.”
- “I was looking after elderly parents”.

One attractive factor that was most important for this particular librarian was:

- “a job that gave me, that was *less stressful*, that didn’t have a managerial content to it, I mean managerial with staff, because I was looking after elderly parents”.

Although it is not really touted as such, I think school librarianship is possibly one of the least stressful jobs in the profession. As the assistant librarian who is still studying expressed it, “I’m just having fun basically, studying and having fun in my job.”

The final two ‘attractions’ mentioned by my participants were ‘variety’ in the job;

- “I thought there would be a lot of variety”,

and two former teachers mentioned their background in education as being a factor that steered them towards school librarianship:

- “I was comfortable in schools, comfortable working with children / teenagers. And some people aren’t. Some people find that extremely hard.”
- “(the job) was in a school and I was a trained teacher, and also I knew it had a very high Polynesian roll and I had actually worked for a year in a school in Samoa, as a volunteer. So that was one of the reasons.”

The librarian who was looking for another job that was part-time and would be less stressful as she had to look after elderly parents, was at that time managing the student library service in a polytechnic library, however, she “wanted to continue in the field of education”...(because)... “I knew I really enjoyed education with younger people and having a library with the whole gamut of knowledge.”

To this point, all the reasons above fit neatly into the concepts already developed in the literature, such as Shannon’s (2008) use of the concept “the practical”, and “the passion”, (p. 218-219), and Jones’s (2010) use of the concept “vocational personality” (p. 176-177).

### **What, who, or how did these factors influence you towards school librarianship?**

I coded seventeen individual influences, the most common being the influence of an ‘education background’, a librarian mentor, the influence of a friend, or one’s husband, and the passion for turning kids on to reading. The ‘practical’ aspects

crop up again, such as managing family life, the importance of having school holidays off, and a convenient location for the place of work. A 'convenient location' was mentioned by two participants, one, because she can't drive and it had to be somewhere she could get to on the bus, and the other participant was influenced to apply for a particular job, partly because the location was close to her elderly parents.

For one participant, the need for a job with a 'purpose', the "altruism – service" concept, as discussed by Jones (2010, p. 174), and others, was particularly strong:

- "I also, have always felt that whatever job I do had to be one that was *useful* in a social and sort of world setting and I feel that being, like I was the housebound librarian for 14 years while my kids were little, and those sort of jobs, where you actually feel you are of *service to the community* and you can actually *make a difference*, is a very important factor in whether I apply for jobs or not."

Other, new influences that were mentioned were technology; "the advertisement mentioned the magical words *internet* and *email*, and I thought, 'I wanted to go ahead', and so I applied here".

Also, the attraction of "managing a whole operation" appealed to one librarian who had been managing part of a larger polytechnic library. "I was quite happy to do everything, from shelving to cataloguing to user education, so that whole range, and I really was attracted to the idea of my own space".

An influencing factor that I haven't seen discussed in the literature, is something I've named as a category one's '**educational comfort zone**' – the type of school environment you feel most comfortable working in. Some of us would rather work in the state than the private sector, and some of my participants found working in a single-sex girls' school a vastly different experience to working in a boys' school.

One of my participants was very clear about the type of school environment that suited her:

- “I like liberal, co-ed schools, being brought up in an education background, and I would have found it harder being in a not so liberal school, so I knew that the environment would be the best for me as well.”

So when a job was advertised at “the perfect school” that was it for this particular librarian. She looked at the advertisement and went:

- “That's my job, there it is, and OK, nobody else would have had a chance to get it because it was my job and it was in, for me, the perfect school. If it had been, 'X private school', or even probably 'X decile 10 traditional girls' school', I wouldn't necessarily have gone for it, and probably not if it were 'X traditional boys' school'”.

Two librarians commented on how much 'easier' it was to work in a single- sex girls' school than a boys' school, how boys seemed to have a different attitude to research, and how one was drawn to seek a similar school 'experience' to that of her childhood.

- “Co-ed X had wonderful things for teenage boys, who were fabulous, but incredibly stressful and just their teenage exuberance leads them to be quite destructive and damaging. So when the opportunity came to work at a single-sex girls’ school, I thought that would be fantastic, and it has proved to be”.....”My boss at the polytechnic had been to the school and when I discussed it with her, she said, the school’s got a great feeling about it, a great culture, and I went to a single-sex school and maybe I was looking for something that was going back to that. And there is that same feeling, but 40 to 50 years on. So that’s it, single-sex and part-time.”
- “I came here and I couldn’t get over the difference between being in an all boys’ school and a girls’ school. In the fact that the girls were just so much more switched into research and I just loved that. The boys, they were lovely, but academically they did the bare minimum.”

Subconsciously, I wonder if the librarian below was also influenced by the fact that this school was a very attractive, private single-sex girls’ school. In answer to the question ‘who influenced you to apply for your current job?’ she replied:

- “A friend told me, she’d seen it advertised in the paper. She wasn’t a librarian, and the job was never advertised on ‘nz-libs’, which surprised me, and I think it was advertised in the Education Gazette”.....”Outside of me thinking it would be quite good, my husband said ‘oh yes, that would probably suit you’. That sort of thing I guess”.

Three out of nine participants, (possibly one or two more), had had their children attend the school at which they worked. Being a parent of the school certainly

increases the 'educational comfort zone' and the motivation to stay at the school while your child is there.

A librarian mentor had special influence with two participants. One librarian mentor gave a former teacher the 'training' and confidence to apply for her first school library position:

- "my boss there was a Flight Sergeant who had trained as a librarian, and she gave me a lot of training in just general librarianship."...."So when the job at X came up, I felt I had this practical library training behind me even though I didn't have a piece of paper, and I had worked as a teacher, so I felt 'oh well, this is a good combination".

For the second librarian, the career progress of her library mentor convinced her that things had moved on, the time was right for entering school librarianship. It was finally being taken seriously as a profession and you could 'make a career of it'. Her colleague had gone from the public library to a private boys' school.

- "And that's when I really first thought, ooh, that the field had opened up, because in the past, when my kids were at school, at primary school, there were no librarians there, it was parent help, and it made me think, 'OK, so the field is opening up, that professional librarians can be employed'. And that was probably when I first started thinking seriously that I might be able to get a job, a proper job, and so I would see X occasionally, and we would chat about her job, and so I knew a bit about school librarianship from her."

Perhaps also, the interest in school librarianship was subtly piqued for the 'private girls' school librarian' by the conversations she had with her children's school librarians' about reading. As she expresses it:

- “a factor I haven't mentioned before, was getting children to read, because with my own children, two of them loved reading, but the third one I have never been able to get to read, and I always found that quite interesting. I used to talk to the school librarians about that, that whole concept of what makes a reader?”

And the 'liberal, co-ed school's librarian' described that passion for reading like this:

- “And there was the knowing that you 'turn kids', that you have the potential to turn kids on to reading, which for me is a huge part of my life, is reading, always has been, and the kids who are not interested you can be instrumental in making them interested, and that seems like a pretty powerful thing to do.”

Most librarians are passionate about reading, as school librarians we do have an almost evangelistic urge to 'convert' non-readers into readers, therein lies our daily challenge. We have a fascination with the 'conversion process' and a strong belief in the importance of our mission, to transform the non-reader to reading, all part of the desire to 'make a difference'.

The final two 'influences' to mention are family influences, and the holidays, again. The career changing former teacher, who has now been in school librarianship for around fifteen years, had never planned on going back into

schools, but she sort of fell into her current position through force of circumstance.

- “At the time I had finished my diploma and I was looking for jobs, my husband wasn’t very well. And this job pitched up here at (the local co-ed school) and they were advertising basically for a library assistant. And I hadn’t spent two years working my hardest and getting my diploma to become a library assistant, but *the hours were very good, etc*”...”<sup>1</sup> probably wouldn’t have applied for it, but for the fact that he wasn’t well and it was really his security more than anything, that I would be employed should he not be employed, you know? I probably wouldn’t have applied. I would have stuck it out for something a bit more ambitious. I think school librarianship doesn’t have the aura of being a legal librarian.”

It’s obvious from the above, as was the case with two other participants and myself, actually, that school librarianship was at least initially a very temporary commitment, until we were won over by other factors, to be discussed shortly. As the assistant librarian who is still studying while working at a single-sex girls’ school says:

- “I still don’t know what kind of library I’d like to end up in. I’m not committed to school librarianship.”

And another librarian who began her job at a single-sex, private girls’ school, over ten years ago, said, “this will be a good start”, meaning, ‘it fits in with the family, I will do this for a while and then move on’, but then, as she says:



- “I **liked** the job! And I stayed in the job.”

This is definitely something that has happened to a lot of us in school librarianship. People enter the profession thinking, this will suit perfectly *for a few years*, while the children are still fairly young, etc, until the time is right and I move on and find something else that is significantly better paid, but then, to their surprise, they discover the immense satisfaction achieved from the job itself, and for these and other reasons they decide to stay in the field.

To conclude this section, I will finish with the school holidays, one of the biggest ‘influencers’ in school librarianship. The following participant, with no degree or library qualifications, was looking for a job that was part-time and gave her school holidays off. She was really excited to discover a job at the local boys’ high school that would give her the perfect work/life balance and yet be challenging and interesting.

- “I felt as teenagers, home alone, me working, it was stressful and I didn’t want that. That’s when they get into trouble, you know? It’s too hard, so I thought, this is ‘ideal,’... (referring to the school holidays and being able to work part-time).
- “No-one influenced me to apply. I just thought, well, it was kind of like ‘PING’; I have to admit, I was really excited. I just thought, oh this is great! Honestly, I can remember saying to (my husband), this is so good; to me, it was like, not that I knew anything about being a librarian, what the job entailed kind of thing, but I just said, ‘it’s ideal!’”

- “And I was just really keen. And luckily I got the job! And I think also luckily, a) I think because there were not many applicants, and b) I could start straight away”...”And I think I just talked myself into the job, to be quite honest.”

In summary, the influence(r)s discussed above all fit into either Shannon’s (2008) concepts; the ‘personal’, the ‘practical’, or the ‘passion’, or the categories developed by Jones (2010) and others, except for the new category I have named “educational comfort zone”.

## Retention – what factors have kept you working in this field?

### **What are the satisfactions in your role as a school librarian?**

Continuing with the participant above, her answer to the above question was:

- “The people, the students, the staff, um, not the money! Yeah, the environment, the job itself, I really like the job, ‘I think it’s the best job in the world!’ So I’d say, the people, the students; plus I’d also have to say, the holidays.”

Her principal satisfactions in the role are her ‘relationship with the boys’, ‘seeing them grow as readers’ and she really likes the ‘relationship with the staff’ as well.

As she puts it, she “likes being able to run her own ship”, she likes being “in charge”.

So how did this participant cope, going into a job without any prior library experience, or qualifications? What has she enjoyed the most? –

- “The fact that basically I am autonomous here and I have been right from day one. I have a TLR, but, don’t get me wrong, he’s great, but basically, they let me do my job. I never have any interference, I’m never told how to buy, how to plan, how to do anything, so you know, just leave me to it. And at first I found it quite hard, because when I started I didn’t really know what I was doing, and I was thinking, ‘jeez!’, just kind of throw you in the deep end and it’s sink or swim around here. *It is* sink or swim around here, and if you’re not capable, well you do sink!”

Examining the 24 individual ‘satisfactions’ that were coded for school librarianship and then comparing the top half dozen ‘satisfactions’ with Herzberg’s six ‘motivators’ and ‘hygiene’ or ‘maintenance’ factors is interesting. When you do this you really begin to see where the strengths and attractions of school librarianship lie.

The summary of the top ‘satisfactions’ from my nine participants were;

- unanimously, the **‘students’**,
- then second equal, the **‘variety’** in the work itself, coupled with **‘new challenges’** and **‘constantly learning’**,
- followed closely by **the ‘people’**, the social aspects of the job, interaction with the staff, teachers, and capable colleagues,
- then all the different elements of **the work itself**, (the ‘reading’, ‘book buying’, ‘helping people’, ‘research’, ‘technology’, ‘working in an educational environment’), and next,
- **‘responsibility’**, and autonomy.

In answer to the questions “what are your principal motivators?” and, “what motivates and encourages you to stay in school librarianship?” using the framework of Herzberg’s six motivators, my participants unanimously stated, the **work itself**, then the **possibility of growth**, followed by **responsibility** and **achievement**. Advancement was not a motivator and recognition for achievement was noted as ‘nice when you got it’, but not a major motivator in this ‘satisfactions’ context.

So it appears that four out of the six of Herzberg’s motivating factors are satisfied very strongly in school librarianship. Also, interestingly, and perhaps this is one of the combining factors which is unique to school librarianship, two of Herzberg’s hygiene / maintenance factors are very strong ‘positives’ of the profession.

Of Herzberg’s ten ‘hygiene’ or ‘maintenance’ factors, numbers four to six are called “interpersonal relations with peers, subordinates and superiors” and number ten is called “personal life”. If these are out of kilter in any way, they can become major sources of job dissatisfaction. Perhaps unusually in the world of work, the ‘interpersonal relations’; the ‘people’, the ‘students’, the ‘teachers’, ‘colleagues’, and all the staff collaboration and interaction, what can often be a source of stress, irritation and frustration in other jobs, is a major plus in school librarianship. These interactions are overwhelmingly positive and enjoyable experiences in school librarianship, a huge source of satisfaction to my participants.

Obviously there are occasions when students, teachers and fellow support staff can be annoying, for example, when ‘boys are super-gluing computers to desks’,

or there is a 'complete and utter lack of support from the computer people', or some 'teachers are rude', or sometimes 'a bit precious'. But on the whole, these highly satisfactory relationships with students, teachers, and colleagues are what get us bouncing out of bed in the morning. As one of my participants expressed it,

- "it's definitely the most satisfying job I've ever had"...."I always look forward to coming to work, every day I look forward to it. You never know when you work with adolescents. You never know what madness is going to attack any of them on any particular day. Yeah, the satisfactions of working with the students. And the communications you have with them...Working with teenagers I find fascinating. I find it never boring!"

The other 'hygiene' / 'maintenance' factor mentioned was 'personal life'. Having the option of flexible work arrangements such as part-time work, sometimes working for as little as 8, or 14 hours a week, and getting all the school holidays off, is a major bonus of school librarianship, especially for those who need or want extra personal time, for responsibilities, or other interests. There are dissatisfactions associated with not being paid for all of the school holidays throughout the year, (as the teaching staff are), but having the school holidays appearing regularly every ten weeks, and most of the Summer off work, is a huge attraction for most.

This participant describes having the holidays as

- "like a wee velvet noose, I have to say. It's like a velvet noose around your neck. It does, it keeps you hooked, because it's such a good - even though you don't get paid for your holidays, (you get holiday pay, but you

don't get paid for all the holidays); it's a velvet noose around your neck because it keeps you there. It's such a bonus, or a plus in some respects, because I like having my two weeks off every whatever. It's very nice, and there aren't many jobs where you can get that – I don't know if I could go back to full time hours with just 4 weeks leave a year?"

And another librarian evocatively describes the variety in the year as one of the attractive factors of school life:

- "I get to be part of a large organisation, which I like, but it's not too large, and I love the rhythms of the year. I love the, I reckon I should have been a farmer if I weren't in a school, because I really enjoy the fact that this happens now, and then something else always happens then, and then there's the holidays. You know, all those sorts of things, I really like the rhythms."

And this assistant librarian is encouraged to stay in school librarianship because of,

- "the hours, and the fact that it's fun. I really like it. I like the way there's variety in the year, starting from orientation right through to stock-take. There's always something happening."

Of the other hygiene and maintenance factors, (except for salary and status, to be discussed shortly), the same librarian said:

- "But supervision, working conditions, job security, personal life, I have no problems with at all."

A number of my participants spoke about their admiration for teachers' commitment and passion, and named that as a factor which has kept them working in school librarianship. These comments are all from experienced librarians.

- “One thing I should mention, I really enjoy the absolute energy that teachers have, and their commitment and passion” ...”I was blown away by the commitment” ...”I don't see myself leaving this job, there'd have to be an extraordinary reason. I'm not looking for anything else, which is quite unusual for me. And it's because of individual teachers and working with them and their acceptance and trying to make a difference.”
- “Well, when I came here there was this amazing woman here who was the teacher librarian. She was a person with a great passion for students, for learning, and for books. And I just learnt so much from her. She was just an amazing person and she died only about four years after I started here.”
- “I get to work with the teachers all the time, which is really interesting, because you see the good ones and the not so good ones and the good ones are wonderful to work with.” ....”I like the aims of working in a school and I like the educational aims and the feeling from everybody that they know they can make a difference for an awful lot of kids. And so that it's not just me that can make that difference. I'm part of an entity that is all focussed on making a difference for these kids lives and that feels good.”

These next comments discuss salary, but also support the comments above, and elaborate on the extra 'responsibilities' that teaching staff have, which we don't have.

- “Because I’ve been a teacher and I’ve been observing teachers (for years), I don’t think a school librarian should ever be paid what teacher’s are paid, because I don’t see that we have the responsibilities that a teacher has. We don’t have to manage students, in a way that a teacher does, we don’t have to work when we walk out the gate, you don’t have to do anything more, you may, but you don’t have to. You don’t feel obliged to have any other involvement in school activities or anything like that, certainly when you’re paid by the hour you don’t. And so I wouldn’t expect to be paid as a school teacher, but I would expect to be paid more than what I’m currently paid. Somewhere up there, because you’re certainly teaching, you’re certainly having that involvement and you’re certainly putting some intellectual input in. But you see teachers especially at this time of the year, and they’re exhausted, and I’m not exhausted. It’s huge, and there’s that emotional involvement, mentally draining, and we can tuck ourselves away in an office every now and then and take a breather. They can’t. Either they should be paid a lot more, - but I don’t think we should ever be paid an equal salary, I don’t see that. Anyway, that’s by the by!”

Interestingly, this librarian mentions the 'emotional distance' which we can have, that Jones (2010) discusses in her article on “The occupational choice of school librarians”.



One of the very experienced school librarians summarises the importance of Herzberg's "interpersonal relations with peers, subordinates and superiors".

- "I believe human relationships are the most important part of any role you have. If you haven't got that, it doesn't work, no matter how technically able you are. 'He tangata, he tangata, he tangata' (people, people, people). And I accept the fact that I'm not a teacher, I don't try to be a teacher, but if I can support teachers, I enjoy supporting teachers."....."Developing your relationships with teachers, when you see what you do can help them, that's hugely important."

Besides the satisfactions of the work itself, a number of my participants who have degrees, library qualifications and a number of years experience in librarianship before coming to school libraries, have been motivated to stay in school librarianship through successful achievements which have come about through their own initiatives. Two participants demonstrated the efficacy of report writing to their Principals on important matters.

One of these librarians, who began her school library career very part-time and in a job share arrangement, became very dissatisfied with this, and so she conferred with her job share colleague at that time and said,

- "this job is under-houred and underpaid and I'm writing a report to our Principal to that effect. I can't last long in this job unless I'm paid properly."

"We sent the report and restructured the job with clear responsibilities for each of us, instead of just doing what we wanted to do within the job description; so we had clear responsibilities, and she (the Principal) wanted me as the 'lead'. She

said she only wanted to talk to one of us, so she did that, and she put us on teacher salaries, except that we were to be paid for 80% of the year. We weren't being paid for the holidays. But we could follow the steps in the teacher grades, and she gave me two management units, as she wanted me to also be the Manager of the Archivist, because it was going to be a new position, 10 hours a week, and she wanted me to manage this person because she was not I.T. proficient."

"So, with a decent salary, more hours, a very pleasing job, I was happy! New challenges that I've set for myself, and I feel, 'oh I can't leave until I've got this sorted out. I want to do this and I want to do that.'"

This same librarian has also put her report writing / negotiating skills to good effect to acquire 20 hours for another staff member. She linked this request to a report where she investigated RFID in the library, and she said, "If we don't get RFID, I need those 20 hours for (X), because we have the resource room textbooks to manage." She didn't get the RFID, but they did get the 'hours'!

This sort of success feeds into itself as both an achievement, and recognition for achievement, which is very satisfying.

Another librarian has always used her annual reports to state what she needs. When she first arrived at her new school she did a report on ICT in the school, and she thinks the laptops, (two carrels of 16 laptops each), which were probably going somewhere else in the school, ended up in the library because of that. "Of course", she says, "that's all increased our workload, so my next request will be for more staff hours".

This next librarian, who is fairly new to school librarianship, was given a mandate and the resources to make radical changes to their school library. She has found carrying out that challenge exciting and very satisfying, and she feels that “there’s achievement here and recognition, that’s for sure.” It’s a motivator to stay in school librarianship for her, “because it does give you a sense of satisfaction when things work out well and you can see that you’ve had an impact on an individual or on a class. And I think recognition for achievement goes with it. I think if you didn’t get recognition for achievement, you’d probably be less likely to stay, I would be.”

So the confidence to be assertive and ‘push your schools harder’, is strongly advocated by another experienced librarian, working at the co-ed school.

- “You know, we look at the ‘list-serv’ sometimes, and X and I will go, why don’t they talk to the Board, or why don’t they talk to the Principal, and those sorts of things? Because I think on the whole, we’re not pushy. And I definitely think they could help themselves and other school librarians by pushing harder. And increasing the whole profile of school librarianship”.

The librarian at the local boys’ high school also believes that achievement is quite important as a motivator.

- “Recognition for achievement, yes and no. Um, I myself know what I’ve achieved since I’ve been here and I do get recognition from staff and other librarians too. They say things to me and that’s nice, and that is nice to have, but I know that since I’ve started here, the library was a sort of ‘portal pod’ somewhere in the school, and now it’s not. It’s part of the school. You know, the promotion that I’ve achieved since I’ve been here

has made it a 'hub' of the school now, which is really good. Sometimes it's not used as much as it should be, but you know, it's always a work in progress."

As this librarian says, our job is all about customer service, you're there to help people, and helping people definitely gives us the most satisfaction.

The 'initially reluctant' school librarian lists her satisfactions as: "helping people; staff and students, that's primarily number one; the satisfaction of having an interesting job, and the satisfaction I guess of working in a people environment, although you're in an administrative capacity. You're not tucked away in a sterile little office dealing with papers all the time. Certainly, not *the money*."

And a satisfaction mentioned by all the participants in different ways is the enjoyment of working with young people. The librarian who has spent most of the last 20 years working with Maori and Pasifika students said:

- "I think maybe the enjoyment of seeing young people, and occasionally you get it, you make a difference by handing them a book. You make a difference if boys who've always said they hate reading, you hand them a book and they actually enjoy it and come back for more. That makes a difference."

Another librarian of approximately 20 years standing said:

- "The other thing is when you get girls coming up and saying 'oh, I just love this book! Can we get this in our library?' Seeing their enthusiasm. The other thing that I really enjoy seeing too is when the little year 9's come in and they're so nervous and new, and the library's a great place for them

to come, and just to see them develop from that year 9 to these gorgeous women in year 13. To see that transformation in them, it's like a privilege really."

And similar sentiments are expressed by the librarian who moved from the co-ed to the girls' school:

- "And giving a student a book and they come back and say, that was fantastic, what else can I have? And I do enjoy the younger students, because they're enthusiastic and passionate, but the senior students I am always totally in awe of how sophisticated they are; the ones who are about to head off to university, and what they're doing. It's encouraging."

The joys of collection building, or book-buying, are mentioned by this boys' school librarian, tied in with the satisfaction of making successful choices.

- "What I like about this job is you get to do everything and as far as I'm concerned one of the best parts of being a librarian is buying the books! And researching, and finding the books, and getting the satisfaction that the boys read them, and thinking that you're in tune with what they want, and that challenge of being able to buy a book and you know they *want it!*"... "I like the satisfaction of boys picking it up and coming back to me and saying 'that was really good!' I do like that part of the job very much. That gives me enormous satisfaction."

Two of the motivators which link in with the use of technology in the library, are the 'possibility of growth' and 'achievement'. One co-ed librarian said she

'enjoyed the I.T. side of the library', and one of the girls' school librarian's really enjoyed the intellectual challenge of developing library pages on *Moodle*.

- "I spent three weeks of my first Christmas holidays here developing library pages on Moodle. So that was a challenge for me, to make sure I could do something like that, because I started libraries when they had card catalogues, so technology is something I've had to work to get. And I use the library Moodle pages for absolutely every lesson. It's the basis for every lesson, so I can just plan any teaching lesson I've got using these pages. I've got links to everything. I've got explanations for everything; u-tube clips, all sorts of things. I really enjoyed doing it over the holidays, it was a challenge for me, but I got there."

To summarise the many satisfactions discussed above in school librarianship; all of my participants felt they enjoyed a good work-life balance; the work environment suited them, they felt their values matched the values of where they worked; the 'work itself' is very satisfying, and on the whole, they enjoyed sufficient responsibility, possibility of growth, and achievement in their roles. Some were luckier than others with recognition for achievement. The positives of school librarianship, at least for the group I interviewed, outweighed the negatives for recruitment and retention.

## Discussion of the 'hygiene' or 'maintenance' factors

### **What are some of the dissatisfactions in school librarianship?**

The top three areas of dissatisfaction would have to be salary, status, and working conditions, in brief. The boys high school librarian who has been at her

school for over 5 years now, says that low salaries are definitely a problem for recruitment.

- “Even when I came here I halved my hourly rate to what I was getting, which is criminal really, and I’m still not back up to the hourly rate I was on.”...”It just seems to me that with the salary side of things, you’re getting people with degrees and qualifications for a job where they’re poorly paid. And the value that a librarian offers within a school, it’s hard to quantify it, but you get a good librarian and they’re worth their weight in gold. And quite frankly I think they should be compensated for that.”

Generally, school library wages trail behind the rest of the profession. One of my participants working at a private girls’ school, had very perceptive comments to make about this situation in New Zealand schools.

- “You know I do think librarians are quite a passive group. And it suits a lot of people to work in a school library, because it’s school hours and school holidays, if that’s what you have, I mean I work 8.00 to 4.30 pm. So that really the employer gets away with quite a lot because of that, and also they are very prepared to take on non-qualified people, particularly in the primary schools, and then they pay them a teacher’s aide salary. It’s sort of a vicious cycle really. I don’t know how you raise the status of the profession at all!”

She also had this to say about her own salary.

- “Salary, well, I did take a big drop in salary, in fact both my previous jobs paid more than this one, but then salary’s not the be all and end all.”

And that view of salary is reiterated by two other participants.

- “Salary is fine. I get paid at the top of Level C I think; I don’t know where to after that. But again, that’s not why I’m working here. I have had much bigger salaries, but the stress associated with them’s not worth it.”
- “The salary is not fantastic, but that doesn’t really worry me. I think I’d rather be happy here than in a pressurised job somewhere else, which is not as stimulating. I’d much rather be here.”

Another librarian admits things have got to the stage where she should really be doing something about her diminishing pay packet.

- Salary – “Yes, I would say that would be a dissatisfaction mainly because about 5 to 6 years ago, I reached the top of my salary scale, which is not particularly high for the work I do and apart from increases which the NZEI have organised, they’ve never looked at that, and that occasionally annoys me”....”I’m a bit disgruntled about it, but then I have to do something about it myself, so there’s no point being disgruntled when I haven’t mentioned it to anyone. So I have to follow that one up I think.”

And a librarian at one of the co-ed school’s said with regard to pay compared to the rest of the library profession - “well I know we’re bottom of the pile.”

- “And I think the main problem there is we’re paid from the school’s operational grant. And if you have a very pro-library exec as ‘School X’ has, then you’ll get your contracts which raise the bar, and if you get one where the library is just part of the scenery, then you’ll get paid



accordingly, and on top of the scale, the Associate C scale. But then after the top of that what can you do?”

Another strong comment with regard to the way school librarians are paid came from the other private girls' school librarian, who is lucky enough to be paid on the teacher's salary grades, etc.

- “(The Education Department) should restructure where the salary of the librarians comes from. Currently it's from the Operations Grant and so you're competing with computers and photocopiers and librarians are coming off second best. And (salaries) should not come from there. Librarians should be treated as professionals, which they are. It should be pointed out that teachers have a four year degree, but so do librarians. They should be treated as the professionals that they actually are. They just do a different job and just because it's a support role, even though it's not the main role of the organisation, as it only is at the National Library, it shouldn't be seen as a lesser job, or lesser status.”

The above comments lead into the vexed question of librarians being called Support Staff in schools. This can have ramifications for how we are 'viewed' by the teaching staff. Call it an assault on our dignity, or foolish pride, or what you will, but many of us well qualified school librarians really dislike being lumped as support staff. The following comment is made by the private girls' school librarian who is still fairly new to school librarianship.

- “We're labelled 'Support Staff', but sometimes I'm not, and I find that really weird, in 'no man's land', 'netherworld', or something. Sometimes I'm lumped with the teachers and sometimes I'm not. And I do find that

probably a negative factor.” ...”I do think I’m somehow in between almost.”... “So I suppose the only thing is where you fit in exactly, and that actually doesn’t bother me, it seems that sometimes you’re expected to do things one way, the Support Staff way, and sometimes it’s the professional teaching type way. Well, they chop you into, there seems to have to be two categories, the teaching staff and non-teaching staff, which is fair enough, and then it’s the Support Staff.”

The teacher who became a school librarian at a local co-ed school well over a decade ago, expresses it very well. As she says, it would be nice to *always* be seen as a ‘co-professional with a defined role’.

- “Another dissatisfaction, or an issue, it isn’t anything major, is that issue of being a ‘support staff’ or a ‘co-professional?’ And I understand the role as being in support of what’s going on in classrooms, but it’s not that passive! It *can* be that passive, but it would be nice to be seen as a co-professional with a defined role, that is as much for student life and learning as a teacher’s role. So it’s probably that dissatisfaction sometimes of not being seen in that equal capacity.”

The librarian at another Wellington co-ed school said that as far as status is concerned, although her school is probably better than a lot of schools in the way it acts towards its Support Staff, you are still mostly aware that you are Support Staff in the hierarchy *below* the teachers, and she gives the example of how their very well qualified ‘library assistant’ feels about his ‘status’.

- “I get (annoyed) sometimes that I; it’s like X who works for us part-time in the afternoons. He was Dux at our school, and he’s got a triple degree,

and a teaching degree, and he was offered two jobs in different departments and he said, no, he wanted to work in the library in the afternoons. So he works for peanuts in the afternoons here, and he said it was really obvious to him, the difference between when he was a student teacher and he was here on section and he was being treated as a potential teacher, and when he became a Support Staff. He said it was very obvious the difference in how people behaved towards him. They still think he's clever, but, they, he's 'only a Support Staff.' That's annoying, because I'm not used to that. I'm used to working in libraries where there are lots of other professional librarians and so you accept your status as a professional librarian amongst that." ... (Also),"the teaching staff are definitely the top of the hierarchy and whatever qualifications you have got are important."

Another issue is the role of the Teacher with Library Responsibility. It's my personal view that this role is an anachronism, especially if you have well qualified library staff. Many schools now have reporting lines direct from the Library Manager to the Deputy Principal, or Principal, which is a far better situation for the status of the library as a whole. The librarian who is new to school librarianship reports to her Deputy Principal, but she said she thought the whole TLR concept would be very off putting for a qualified, experienced librarian.

'Status' is not something that bothers everybody I interviewed. One librarian said, "Status; that's never worried me. I feel really comfortable here. I figure you sort of, kind of, get what you earn." And another librarian said, "Status; I find, since I have now risen to the top of the pile, our status is not a source of dissatisfaction."

And the librarian at the boys' school said, "I feel very included by the teachers here at this school. Whenever anything is happening, I get the feeling they don't see me as *just* the librarian, and they include me in anything, whether it be social or within the school. I do get that feeling that they appreciate me and value me."

As for working conditions; most school librarians accept the realities of life in a school and the economic limits that go with it. One librarian at her state girls' school said,

- "you could say you can see that our library's quite down at heel. And the furniture's old and unattractive. I'm also a realist. I know there's very little money in the school. I've spoken with the Principal, we've talked with an architect. I was quite excited, I thought that we might get some refurbishment in the next five year money, but it's not going to happen. I understand the reasons for it, the science lab's are urgently in need."..."I accepted all this when I came. I know what schools are like. I had a brand new library at X, and that was lovely, but you know, you have to be realistic."

And another librarian said with respect to working conditions, "I just put up with things! I'm a very good 'put-er-up-erer".

This next comment is probably a mix of two factors, working conditions and 'company policy and administration'. The boys' high school librarian who came to school librarianship from the world of finance, and accounts, said:

- “the wheels turn slowly in a school. In the private sector, you want something, you got it; you don’t get that here. It just takes forever to achieve things sometimes. And I find that very frustrating.”

To sum up the feeling about the ‘hygiene’ or ‘maintenance’ factors, I think the librarian from the state girls’ school expressed it very well, by saying:

- “it definitely comes down to the money and the status doesn’t it? And conditions. Money, status and working conditions. So to me, anyone who chooses to be a school librarian, is making an informed choice, or if they’re not, they’re in for a bit of a shock. I know that that’s what happened at my previous school when I left. I think a young man went in from quite a sheltered government department and from what I understand it was a big culture shock for him. It’s incredibly fast-paced, you’ve got to make do with absolutely nothing, teachers are going at 100 miles an hour and you’ve got to fit in with them. If you don’t then you miss opportunities. So I would say that unless a lot more money is made available out of the Support Staff budget, you’re not necessarily going to get people who want to be there with the best qualifications in the world. You see what I’m saying?”.... “Why do we do it?” ... “It either suits your lifestyle, you love it, or you hate it, and you should go.”

Most people come to school librarianship with their eyes wide open and women are still choosing to do these roles because it suits their lifestyles. The ‘hygiene’ or ‘maintenance’ factors are not huge sources of dissatisfaction, at least for those in the job; they are more niggling annoyances from time to time.

## Recruitment – inhibitors to recruitment

One of the 'problems' for school librarianship is its low profile within the library profession. As one co-ed school participant said, it isn't "pushed as an area of professional librarianship. So when people are training, it's not pushed as, this is an area you can go into that's as 'worthy' as 'web development'. It's not regarded as a highly professional area by most other librarians still. And the money is still really bad; the conditions are 'appalling', people being paid for 40 weeks a year and part-time only."

Another co-ed school librarian named the 'low profile' of school librarianship as a definite inhibitor to recruitment. "And that's more a prejudice I think than in any way reflecting what you do. In that the younger the age of the child, the more sort of basic your job has to be. I'm sure out there, if you said you were a primary librarian, that doesn't feature maybe as highly as being a secondary librarian?" She adds, "probably also the pay? And even the hours? To attract and retain the best staff, you've got to offer hours, and pay and conditions that are going to get your graduates from university courses and things like that."

"Advertise at library school?" suggests the private girls' school librarian. And she also thought the "Services to Children and Young Adults" paper offered at Victoria University could be more practically related to school librarianship.

The former teacher, now co-ed school librarian, also said that she would 'love to see a course at a polytechnic, maybe not a university, for school librarians.

Because I think there's a lot to know to do a job really well in a school library; to sell yourself, to up your profile; to be really au fait with NCEA, with the education system; what NCEA means, to be able to be quite confident talking about

research and information sources and all that kind of thing. It's a specialised area and I'm not sure the actual profession recognises itself!"

To combat the low profile, school librarianship needs to be promoted more as a career option, at high school job fairs, and where you get your degrees, at university and polytechnics. This is the view expressed by the boys' high school librarian who found her dream job in a late career change. "I wish I'd found it, or thought of it before, but I never did. It never occurred to me. But really I should have! It's like my one big regret I suppose you could put it, that being a librarian never even entered my mind." This is a perfect example of how Bosseau and Martin describe librarianship as an "accidental profession... populated overwhelmingly by people who discovered it while detouring from some other planned career" (Bosseau & Martin, 1995, as cited in Shannon, 2008, p. 225).

Better publicity about what we actually do, in terms of developing literacy and developing learning, would be a good thing. And some work to combat the negative publicity in the media surrounding working in schools. As one participant, near retirement, who works at a girls' high school said,

- "if you read the newspapers, all you think of is that teenagers go out and get drunk on Friday night, or the complete weekend, and drive around in fast cars and take drugs. But they don't see all these gorgeous teenagers who are out there helping other people and doing all sorts of wonderful things; great sportspeople and leaders in their communities, and also a lot of teenagers, they bear a tremendous amount of responsibility in their families, and I'm thinking particularly of Polynesian people. Those girls work really hard some of them, they work hard at home, and a lot work

part-time.” We need to emphasise “how wonderful it is to work with young people and perhaps we should have advertisements similar to the teaching ones, for school librarianship?”

With respect to publicising what we do a bit more, the girls’ school assistant librarian feels we need to work on our ‘image’. Putting it bluntly, she says, “having a brighter image might be helpful?” – “ditch the fuddy-duddy image some people have!”

She also suggests that better publicity similar to the ‘go teaching’ advertisements, where librarians could be shown teaching and encouraging the next generation, would be useful; perhaps emphasising it’s not all books, it’s I.T., online databases, multimedia, all the rest of it. She also commented on the fact that the 2010 National Library Week poster had a picture of a Wellington school librarian on it, wearing a tee-shirt saying “Ask me”, or “Ask a librarian, you might be surprised”. Well, “I think she looked quite ‘hip’, you know, but it didn’t say she was a school librarian in the poster. Something like that just to point out that school librarians’ are pretty cool in what they do.”

One of the biggest problems for recruitment to school librarianship is that, as McInroy (1990) points out in the literature, it can be seen as a career “cul-de-sac”, (p. 23).

Advancement was definitely not a motivator for my group of participants however. Comments from my participants ranged along the lines of;



- “there is a lack of career advancement in school librarianship. You can’t go anywhere but up your salary scale, unless you are the assistant librarian. It is a drawback in school libraries”.
- “I’ve ‘silo-ed’ myself, because now, if I go out and apply for other jobs, there’s going to be a lot of eager beavers out there, who’ve done more mainstream stuff. School librarianship is still not mainstream. I do feel that it’s still not recognised as professional as other library areas.”
- “I do think school libraries are seen as some sort of ‘ghetto’. Because the pay’s low and a lot of school librarians don’t have library qualifications.”
- “I do think that probably, it’s almost a dead – not ‘dead end’, but once you come to a school and particularly a biggish school, and you are the librarian, where do you go after that?... So what I’m saying is, if I was younger, I wouldn’t have come to a school. I remember talking about it when I was doing my M.L.I.S. to someone, and we decided that school librarianship was too narrow to go into from the beginning definitely, because it didn’t give you enough experience, and also, all this money doing an M.L.I.S, thousands, to go and earn peanuts, and then you’ve got nowhere to go after that?”
- “And I think too, sort of, when you’ve got your Diploma, you’re at a highly employable level when you’ve finished your qualifications to move into other things, and I think once you leave it for too long, you almost get *stuck* in school librarianship, well, mentally you probably do.”

Because there is no prime motivator to switch schools, there is often very little staff movement in school libraries, particularly once you have attained Head of Department status, as Library Manager. As one of my participants put it, “I’m not particularly interested in shifting libraries. I mean what other school library would offer anything more?”

Fortunately, the new LIANZA registration system, for those who choose to engage with it, will help encourage continual professional development and prevent the temptation to rest on our laurels, or become stale in the job; if people do stay for years and years at the same school.

### **Recruitment – recommendations and discussion**

Most of this group of participants agreed that we need to push the Ministry of Education for qualified librarians in our school libraries, “otherwise we’re never going to raise the status of school librarianship, are we?”

At the moment school librarianship is a lifestyle choice rather than a salary / status choice, and to get that status there has to be more of an emphasis on getting qualified librarians to run libraries and

- “that has to come from the Education Department .There has to be leadership to specify that this is what is necessary and ‘they’ve’ got to encourage Boards of Trustees to recognise that this is really important. That they do their library and their school a huge disservice otherwise, as their students are disadvantaged by not having a qualified librarian. It can’t just be parent helpers.”

I agree that this is important, but I also agree with this participant's view that qualifications don't necessarily make the person right for the job. "Of course it's important to have qualifications, but you have to have other skills as well and again it comes down to people, people skills."

Another key suggestion from the state girls' school librarian is:

- "education of Principals – to know what they're wanting. Or whoever's doing the employing. And that would very much depend on their experience with the last school librarian they had probably. So it's up to us to promote ourselves too. It comes down to us making a difference while we're there, so that they don't settle for less. You have to come in, make yourself valued, make sure that when you leave, you've established a position for the school library, (this is the person we're talking about); make sure that the position descriptions and everything reflect what you're doing. And I think writing; I think reporting to your Principal about issues that do cause you problems, like when I wrote my report on ICT. I related it to the annual plan, the strategic plan, and our goals."

Ensuring your Principal understands the professional nature of your role means you need to set a standard in your school. As stated by one participant, "be a role model. Other people can then advocate on your behalf, for example, senior management can say, 'but in our school we have x and it's working'. And SLANZA needs to speak at more teachers' and principals' conferences to advocate for more qualified staff in school libraries, to show what can be done, and what they're missing out on otherwise".

One participant thought school librarians could assist with recruitment of good staff by being involved in the recruitment of their replacement if that were possible. “It doesn’t always work out that way. Someone will leave and you replace after they’ve gone. But if the Principal’s been satisfied with the librarian, having the librarian involved, (would be a good thing), because with the best will in the world, Principal’s don’t really understand what’s involved in running a library.”

The mentoring scheme that’s being developed as part of the LIANZA registration process and also being developed currently as a SLANZA initiative for new school librarians will hopefully assist with retention of new young librarians. The participant who came to school librarianship without any prior library experience or qualifications admitted that she struggled with information literacy teaching. She wasn’t the only participant who had difficulties with information literacy and this is an area where mentoring by someone who is proficient at it would be really helpful in boosting confidence levels.

As mentioned earlier there is a lot to learn that is unique to school librarianship, and having mentors available to lend an ear when a new school librarian is feeling overwhelmed by something, or feeling a bit isolated by being on their own in a library, might help prevent someone really good from giving up and wanting to leave.

Promotion, publicity and explaining what we do so people understand our usefulness and purpose in assisting literacy and learning in schools, is vital and we need more of it for recruitment purposes. As one participant said, “Even my brother asked me the other day, ‘what do you actually do? You issue books?’”

So to effect change, school librarians need to make presentations to their Boards of Trustees, and to their parent community, and even further into the community through involvement with 'library schools' and teachers' colleges. Publishing and promoting aspects of school librarianship in academic journals of the wider library profession, and delivering papers on school librarianship at LIANZA conferences, would all help raise the profile and prestige of school librarianship.

The assistant librarian at the state girls' school had a good point to make about raising our profile within LIANZA. She is a member of both SLANZA and LIANZA, and she said that of the two or three LIANZA functions she has attended, she has been the only school librarian there. Another librarian commented on how a lot of people who are school librarians aren't so interested in belonging to either SLANZA, or LIANZA, or that big wider field. "They like their little job, but they're not actually interested in the bigger picture". Visibility within LIANZA, and showing a professional interest in the wider library profession is a vital step towards becoming 'more mainstream' as an occupational choice.

School librarianship needn't be a feminised occupation. Many school teachers and young men and women are attracted to school librarianship and would choose to enter it and stay in the profession, if the issue of poor pay could be addressed. As one of my participants said,

- "I guarantee there are not a lot of school librarians who live off just their earnings. There are some, and I don't know how they survive on that. Most men would look at that and go, 'yeah right.' 'What if I have kids and my partner's at home breastfeeding for months, I can't survive on that.' We can't survive on it. So until they actually do something about that,

there are a few male school librarians and it is lovely when we hear about them, but they don't generally stay in it for too long, do they, because they can't afford it."

And another school librarian expressed similar thoughts, while excusing herself for sounding sexist.

- "You get a young man between 25 and 35 he'll want a full time job probably, won't he? So I think that could be one of your main problems as far as males in a school library go."

Also, there are excellent teachers out there who are completing or have recently completed their Masters in Library and Information Studies. One of these teachers has gone into public librarianship instead of back into a school, and another is gaining her qualification for use either in the United States or Australia, where school library media specialists are quite well paid. Neither will probably choose to enter school librarianship in New Zealand unless they can keep their teacher salaries and conditions. So school librarianship is losing these potentially wonderful recruits and will continue to do so until the Ministry of Education is prepared to do something about it for the whole of the profession.

Shannon's (2008) study concludes that the responsibility for recruitment "lies with several stakeholder groups including professional associations, individual information professionals, LIS programs, and employers" (p. 225). To summarise her recommendations again, they are:

- "recruit the 'best and brightest' teachers and undergraduates" – within my small group of participants, at least one high school librarian has been

successful in doing this, by luring a former Dux of the school into school librarianship. It is also encouraging that gradually within school librarianship, the numbers of librarians who hold a Masters qualification is increasing.

- “be alert to those re-entering the work force or seeking a career change.”
- “invest in the future by starting early: target secondary school students” – certainly we may encourage some students to consider librarianship as a profession, but they may not start out in school librarianship; they may come to it later when they have more ‘experience’ under their belts. As one of my participants said, “kids go through secondary schools and they see that the teachers are the ‘authorities’ and that the librarians aren’t.”
- “invest in the future by educating employers: target school principals” – advocated as an essential task by most of my participant group.
- “challenge negative stereotypes and promote rewards associated with the job”, (p. 225-6). Absolutely; the rewards of this job are many and various as discussed.

Another article entitled, “Recruiting the next generation of school librarians”, by K. Bishop and Sue Janczak, (2007), gives another list of ways by which school librarians can promote their profession every day:

- “share your reasons for career choice”
- “leave your office and mingle with students”
- “take every possible opportunity to tell others what you do”

- “emphasize the positive aspects of being a school librarian”
- “model your profession in ways that demonstrate its attractiveness”
- “mentor young people and minorities”
- “promote the value of school librarianship”
- “educate others about the impact of school librarians on student achievement . Start today – do your part and help recruit the next generation of school librarians!” (p. 18).

## Conclusion

School librarianship appeals to many women as a lifestyle choice of profession, where they can enjoy flexibility in working hours and the school holidays off, if that is part of their contract. Alternately, there is the potential to negotiate full time hours and negotiate the number of paid weeks’ holiday per year. Most school librarians in state schools in New Zealand currently get paid for the term time only, plus perhaps five weeks holiday pay and statutory holiday entitlements.

Encouragingly, however, there are more and more exceptions to this rule and as better qualified librarians enter the profession, hopefully they will continue to “push harder” for more satisfactory conditions of employment; to be paid for 52 weeks of the year, and paid for anything from 6 to 9 weeks holiday per year. This profession is unlikely to attract many young men or women who have to repay student loans, or support a family, unless the issues of low pay and insecure conditions of employment are addressed. As a participant said, “the union,



(NZEI), can only push so hard, the Ministry of Education has to agree in the end to better pay and conditions”.

Not everyone who enters school librarianship wants to work in the school holidays, so keeping some flexibility in the system for negotiating the terms and conditions that suit particular individuals is desirable.

The pay equity work should definitely continue with respect to school librarians, and SLANZA must continue to advocate on our behalf to the Ministry and the Minister of Education, and to the Principal’s Association. As one participant said, “people have got to push; librarians, and the library profession as a whole need to push school librarianship as a field, so that it becomes ‘less ignorable”.

The motivation for entering school librarianship may be convenience and having a good work-life balance, but the immense satisfactions achieved in the job keep those who love it happy in the profession. And those whom it doesn’t suit quickly leave.

Working in schools, interacting with young people, promoting the next generation, ‘doing good in the world’, collaborating with and supporting good teachers in what they do, is hugely varied, stimulating and satisfying work. Who wouldn’t want to be a school librarian given half a chance?

### **Suggestions for further research**

There is now ample proof in the research that a good school librarian in a well supported school library can make a positive and beneficial difference in a child’s enjoyment of reading, enjoyment and confidence in libraries generally, and a huge difference in their learning potential while at school. It is also evident that

support for the role of the school librarian by the Principal and Senior School Management team is a vital ingredient for this success.

Further research in New Zealand school libraries investigating the perceptions of Principals, the Boards of Trustee members and Senior School Management teams of school librarians and their role in assisting students to higher levels of achievement, would be useful for greater mutual understanding.

As there is a lack of diversity in school libraries with regard to age, ethnicity, and gender, it would be useful to investigate the reasons why there are so few male school librarians and why there are so few younger school librarians, and why people leave school librarianship?

Finally, the school library profession in New Zealand would benefit from some quantitative research which could give a much needed statistical profile of the profession. It would be so valuable to know more about general conditions in schools in New Zealand; how many library staff are employed for the roll of the school; what are their qualifications, hours of work per week, how many weeks of the year are they paid for; what salary scale is the librarian on, (Associate C? or Administrative C within the range of rates?, or on a teacher salary scale?, or less than any of this?); what is the size of your school budget for the number of students at your school, and so on.

Currently, there is an arbitrariness about budgets, 'hours', qualified or non-qualified staff, even whether a library is necessary or not, taking the notorious 'X High School' example. And when as sometimes happens, as at 'X Junior High' lately, there is suddenly NO budget at all for the library, who is going to fight for the school librarian and lend support? Enforceable national standards for school

libraries in New Zealand would be wonderful if that could one day happen. In the meantime, support for your school library comes from the top down in a school and the support of your Principal is crucial.

Also, as one of my participants said, quoting Marilyn Waring, “if you don’t count, you don’t count”; so quantitative research gathering statistics and policies about the current state of school librarianship in New Zealand would be extremely valuable further research.

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**Word count: Approx 18,500**

## **E-mail covering letter**

## **Appendix 1**

Subject line: Lynn Walker invites your participation in her research project on school librarianship

Body of e-mail letter:

Dear XXXX

(As you may know), I'm in the process of upgrading my library qualifications to an MLIS and I've reached the stage where I need to carry out a small research project. I'm proposing to investigate the reasons behind our choice of school librarianship as a career and find out what motivates us the most while we are in it. I hope that the results of my research will shed some light on the motivating factors for the choice of school librarianship as a career path, with a view to encouraging recruitment.

I also hope that the results might assist in improving conditions of work for school librarians, and improve retention in the profession, with a better understanding of de-motivating factors in our day to day work. The title of my project is, "So what made you decide to become a school librarian?" – Reasons people currently working in New Zealand school libraries give for their choice of employment.

To collect data for my project, I need to interview as many school librarians as I can in the time available, and I was hoping you might agree to be interviewed by me? I would hope to take up no more than an hour of your time, at a mutually agreed date, time and place, (though it would be some time after mid-March).

All information obtained would remain strictly confidential to my supervisor and I, and the written report would have all data reported in aggregated form, or in



such a way that individual persons or organisations are not identifiable. I have attached an information sheet and consent form, with further information about the project and contact details for questions.

I'll give you time to think about it, and then I'll get in touch, (or feel free to get in touch with me about anything at all).

Many thanks for reading this request through and considering it. I think the end result will make an extremely interesting report and hopefully have a positive impact for school librarians.

I look forward to hearing your response, and very much hope you would like to participate and be willing to be interviewed.

Kind regards,

Lynn Walker.

Home phone:

Email: [walkerlynn@myvuw.ac.nz](mailto:walkerlynn@myvuw.ac.nz)

Mob:



**Information sheet for: Reasons people currently working in New Zealand school libraries give for their choice of employment**

**Interviews (Appendix 2)**

My name is Lynn Walker and I am an MLIS student at the Victoria University of Wellington about to proceed with my INFO 580 research project, for which University ethics approval has been obtained. I am investigating the reasons and motivations for the choice of school librarianship as your current employment, with a view to improving recruitment and retention in the profession in New Zealand. I am inviting secondary school librarians to be interviewed about the factors that attracted you to school librarianship, and about your motivation(s) for choosing school librarianship as a career. With a greater understanding of the principal motivators in school librarianship, it is hoped that measures may be taken to improve conditions of work for school librarians, and that this will assist in recruiting and retaining innovative and creative library graduates for school librarianship in the future.

Participants are asked to allow approximately an hour of their time to be interviewed by me at a mutually agreed time during the month of March. Under the terms of the approval granted by the University, I need to obtain the informed consent of the participants, so you are asked to kindly read this information sheet and the following consent form. The consent form can be signed when the interview takes place.

The interviews will be digitally recorded to aid collection of data, and handwritten notes will be taken. All information obtained will remain confidential, with only my supervisor, Dr Philip Calvert, and I having access to the



information. Interview notes will be kept in a locked file, and electronic information will be kept in a password-protected file.

Two years after completion of the study all data will be destroyed. All opinions and data will be reported in aggregated form in such a way that individual persons or organisations are not identifiable. You may withdraw from this project without question up until 1 May, 2011. Any information provided prior to the withdrawal will be excluded from the report and the data will be deleted.

The results of the study will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that an article will be submitted for publication in a professional journal. Participants will be sent a summary of the research findings at the completion of the study in June, if desired.

If you are willing to be interviewed, or if you have any queries about the project, please contact me at: [walkerlynn@myvuw.ac.nz](mailto:walkerlynn@myvuw.ac.nz). Phone:     or     **Or**, Dr Philip Calvert, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington, P.O. Box 600, Wellington. Phone: (04) 463 5103  
[Philip.Calvert@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Philip.Calvert@vuw.ac.nz)

Thank you most sincerely for your time.

Lynn Walker.



**Victoria University of Wellington, School of Information Management**

**Consent To Participation In Research (Appendix 3)**

**Title of project: “So what made you decide to become a school librarian?” – Reasons people currently working in New Zealand school libraries give for their choice of employment.**

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this project (before data collection and analysis is complete). I may withdraw from this project without question up until 1 May, 2011. Any information provided prior to the withdrawal will be excluded from the report and the data will be deleted.

I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor, the published results will not use my name, or identify the organisation I work for, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me. I understand that the digital recording of interviews will be electronically wiped at the end of the project.

I have the right to leave this interview at any point.

Please indicate if you would like to receive a summary copy of the results of this research when it is completed. YES / NO

Signed:

Name of participant:

Date:



## **580 Interview Questions – a guide (Appendix 4)**

(The questions are roughly grouped with reference to Herzberg's motivation theory in the world of work.)

### **Background**

As we begin this interview could you please just confirm a few things for me about yourself?

Do you have a degree?

Do you have a library qualification? Which one?

How long have you been working as a school librarian?

### **Attraction / retention / influencers**

What factors attracted you to school librarianship (firstly)?

How did these factors influence you (secondly)?

How did you find out about your current school librarianship position?

What, and/or who, most influenced you to apply for your current position?

What, and/or who, most influenced you to apply for your first position in school librarianship?

What factors have kept you working in this field?

### **Herzberg's motivators**

What are the satisfactions in your role as a school librarian?

What would your principal motivators be out of Herzberg's six 'motivators':

1. Achievement
2. Recognition for achievement
3. Work itself (i.e. your job functions, information literacy, cataloguing, etc)
4. Responsibility (Autonomy)
5. Advancement (Where this role can take you career wise, promotion)
6. Possibility of growth (Professional development)

Which of these is lacking or insufficient in your current role?

What motivates and encourages you to stay in school librarianship?

### **Herzberg's 'hygiene' or 'maintenance' factors**

Herzberg's ten 'hygiene' or 'maintenance' factors, (often sources of job dissatisfaction) are:

1. Supervision
2. Company policy and administration
3. Working conditions
- 4-6. Interpersonal relations with peers, subordinates and superiors
7. Status
8. Job security
9. Salary
10. Personal life



Which of these, if any, are dissatisfactions in your current job and how strongly do they influence you to think about leaving school librarianship?

How do you feel about your pay? For example, how do you feel it compares with other areas of librarianship, (e.g., public librarianship, academic librarianship, etc)

How do you feel about career development opportunities in your role?

Are there other factors not listed above which are major sources of dissatisfaction in your current role?

### **Recruitment and retention**

Are there other factors not discussed already which you see as problems or inhibitors for recruitment to school librarianship?

What sort of factors would help, do you think, to attract and retain the best staff for school librarianship?

If you have worked part-time or job shared in your career as a school librarian, what do you have to say, both positive and negative about the experience?

How do you feel school librarians could better assist with recruiting and retaining the brightest and best for school librarianship?

What are your recommendations for recruitment for the future in school librarianship?

What do you feel could be done to effect change and remedy inequities in this very female-intensive area of the library profession?



**(Turn Sony IC Recorder off.)**

Thank you for participating in this study. If I need to verify anything you have said may I ring you to check I have written what you wanted to say? Do you have any questions you would like to ask me about the study?