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Successful Strategies to Attract and Retain Library Staff

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2025

Abstract

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MS, University of Phoenix, 2022

BS, University of Phoenix, 2021

Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Public and private libraries in the Midwestern United States are experiencing a significant staff shortage, a problem that concerns community members, library directors, and policymakers. Staff shortages hinder access of community members to essential library services, including literacy programs, informational support, job application assistance, research assistance, and safety during community crises. This qualitative, pragmatic inquiry study explored effective strategies successful library leaders used to attract and retain qualified employees. Grounded in Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, this study explored successful retention practices applied by six purposively sampled library managers and directors in the Midwestern United States. Data included interview transcripts and a review of the American Library Association (ALA) website. The reflexive thematic analysis was conducted on the semistructured interview data, resulting in three important themes: (a) developing strategic alliances with professional associations such as the ALA to create recruitment pipelines; (b) providing encompassing compensation plans, such as a tiered retirement plan and tuition reimbursement; and (c) incorporating technology to improve efficiency in operation and employee satisfaction. A key recommendation is that library directors should devote at least 3% of the yearly budget to ALA training programs. The implications for positive social change include the potential for library administrators and policy makers to implement effective recruitment and retention strategies, thereby stabilizing library services to their vulnerable and underserved communities.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Project

Background of the Problem

Libraries have experienced noteworthy issues regarding attracting and retaining trained employees. The problem has resulted in critical situations for the libraries and the communities (Omotunde & Alegbeleye, 2021). Libraries are foundational institutions in various communities, offering access to information and learning and supporting the enrichment of cultures. Libraries have free services that are significant to the community (Omotunde & Alegbeleye, 2021). The institution faces difficulties with high employee turnover levels and problems in recruitment, but these problems could possibly intensify due to shifting user needs regarding multifunctional facilities (Noh, 2022). Such issues have adversely impacted libraries' operational effectiveness and capability to deliver quality services to patrons (LeMire et al., 2024). Despite the significance of a stable workplace, most library directors and managers need help attracting and retaining staff (Aljumah, 2023). The impacts of high turnover and failing to meet organizational goals could result in decreased service quality and reduced community impact (Xiao et al., 2020).

Business Problem Focus and Project Purpose

The actual business problem was that library directors and managers had no good strategies for attracting and retaining staff, leading to the realization of organizational objectives. This qualitative pragmatic inquiry study identified and explored practical retention strategies utilized by Midwestern library leaders. The study focused on how these professionals dealt with staffing challenges without hurting service quality through semistructured interviews with six managers and directors. The research sought viable

approaches to balancing Herzberg's motivational and hygiene factors. Three core strategies that reduced turnover and met institutional goals are reported in the findings. Based on this study, libraries were provided with evidence-based recommendations to assist them in retaining their workforce and delivering their community missions.

The population group was successful library managers and directors in the Midwestern United States. A purposive sampling strategy was used to find six library managers and directors with 5 or more years of staff management experience working in Midwestern libraries as participants. These participants were identified and recruited through professional networks and associations related to librarianship. Data collection took place using semistructured interviews and publicly accessible data and documents, such as those found on LinkedIn, Glassdoor, or other social media sites. According to West and McAllister (2023), the ethical implications of leveraging digital platforms for data extraction reflect broader concerns about surveillance capitalism in promotional industries.

This study is based on Herzberg's (1966) motivation-hygiene theory. In that theory, it is assumed that intrinsic motivators like recognition and achievement, and extrinsic hygiene factors like salary and work conditions influence job satisfaction and employee retention.

Research Question

What practical strategies do successful library managers and directors in the midwestern United States employ to attract and retain qualified staff to achieve their annual organizational objectives?

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

Assumptions refer to beliefs considered plausible in a research study but cannot be definitively proven (Faulkenberry, 2022). These assumptions provide the foundation for this study and guide how its findings should be interpreted in the context of library staff attraction and retention. These assumptions assist with framing the research focus and determining the interview protocol when exploring strategies for retaining library staff and achieving organizational goals.

This study assumes that competitive salaries and attractive benefits packages are critical to attract library staff. While financial compensation alone may not guarantee job satisfaction, it is necessary for recruitment and retention, as noted by Salsabil and Cahyo (2023), who emphasized that salary adjustments aligned with qualifications significantly reduce turnover rates. Additionally, opportunities for professional development, such as career advancement and skill-building, are presumed to enhance employee satisfaction and organizational loyalty. Gladia et al. (2024) affirmed that staff are more likely to remain committed to organizations that prioritize personal and professional growth.

A positive and supportive organizational culture is another key assumption. Libraries that foster environments characterized by mutual respect, collaboration, and open communication are likely to retain their employees (Hancock, 2022; Hao & Wang, 2022). Particularly when spatial design aligns with community needs, as seen in complex cultural spaces bridging user-librarian expectations (Noh, 2022). Similarly, work-life balance plays a significant role in job appeal. Flexible work arrangements, including

remote work options and adjustable schedules, are assumed to enhance the attractiveness of library positions (Van Haute, 2021).

An assumption of the study includes that libraries that invest in training and development programs experience lower turnover rates. Employees are more likely to stay in roles supported by continued learning and professional growth (Hancock, 2022; LeMire et al., 2024). Effective leadership and communication are also critical, as they create a sense of belonging and fulfillment, fostering employee commitment and reducing turnover (Omotunde & Alegbeleye, 2021). Lastly, recognizing and valuing employees' efforts is assumed to impact retention significantly. Employees who feel appreciated and see their work as meaningful are likelier to remain with their organization (Salsabil & Cahyo, 2023).

Limitations

Limitation refers to a factor that the researcher has no control over, yet may affect the interpretation or application of findings (Van Haute, 2021); this study identified the following key limitations as part of the initial phase of research:

- The findings might not be generalized across diverse types of libraries, for example, public, academic, or special libraries, because the funding, administrative frameworks, and community needs might differ.
- Implementing these strategies might pose some difficulties for libraries operating in resource-constrained environments, affecting their efficacy.
- Participant responses may have been biased by personal opinions or a desire to present their organizations in a favorable light, thus affecting the reliability of the data.

Some of these limitations are discussed as areas of future research in Section 4.

Transition

Section 1 of this study includes the purpose of the study, provides the research question, and briefly introduces the background of the business problem. It outlined the method, design, and data collection plan and defined the initial assumptions and limitations of the study. This qualitative pragmatic inquiry study explored approaches effectively utilized in employee attraction and retention strategies for library managers and directors in the Midwestern United States, using Herzberg's two-factor theory to guide the study. Section 2 extensively discusses professional and academic literature reviews with conceptual ideas portraying staff retention and motivation. Sections 3 and 4 introduce results and aspects of methodology that lead to practical recommendations for the library administrator and implications for positive social change.

Section 2: The Literature Review

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

This section of the study includes a critical evaluation and comparative analysis of the existing literature on staffing and retention of library staff, emphasizing motivation theories, employee engagement, and the performance of an organization. The sources used include scholarly journal articles, government documents, and books and chapters published between 2020 and 2025, with 85% being peer-reviewed sources published within the period mentioned. The literature review is organized into four main themes: Herzberg's two-factor theory and its current relevance in managing library employees, the distinction between the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators affecting library staff turnover, the methods that can be used for staffing and library talent procurement, and organizational culture and library employees' commitment (Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022). Each theme evaluates the roles and roles of different aspects in good staff attraction and retention mechanisms and acknowledges the gaps in the current literature regarding the applicability to libraries. This reveals how these theories are implemented in practice and the most up-to-date tendencies in managing library personnel. Through this organization, it is possible to systematically analyze how different theories are applied practically in the endeavors of a library manager or director to realize their organizational goals through staff retention.

Conceptual Framework

Leadership

Herzberg's two-factor theory is a classic theory used to explain motivation and satisfaction to workers in the workplace. In his seminal work, Herzberg (1966) identified

two factors influencing employee satisfaction and motivation: optimizers and satisfiers. Achievement, recognition, and personal growth align with and positively impact job satisfaction and performance. Pure hygiene factors that are not inherently motivating, such as pay, physical work environment, methods of working, and company policies, if not met satisfactorily, are likely to cause dissatisfaction. Current examples of using Herzberg's theory show that the theory remains valid in contemporary organizational contexts. For instance, Salsabil and Cahyo (2023) observed that organizations implementing motivator and hygiene strategies had reduced employee turnover and increased job satisfaction. The notion of a dual-factor theory supplies methodological tools for interpreting the multifaceted nature of motivation within libraries, where both appreciation of intrinsic motivators and emphasis on the essential work requirements are salient and distinctly influential (Xiao et al., 2020).

When applied to library management, Herzberg's two-factor theory provides a solid foundation for analyzing staff retention plans. This theoretical background allows a leader to use a practical step-by-step approach toward motivation and administration of hygiene factors in retention strategies. A study by Song et al. (2023) shows how the tenets of the theory can be applied in the current human resource management practices, especially in knowledge-intensive organizations. More evidence regarding the relevance of the theory is provided by Porter and Rigby (2021), who noted that companies that implemented Herzberg's ideas observed increased interest in workers and decreased turnover rates. Moreover, more recent theory implementations explain how it fits present-day work environment issues. Along these lines, the present research on staff attraction and retention was anchored in this theoretical framework in the current study.

Contemporary Library-Specific Applications

Subsequent studies have shown that Herzberg's theory can still be applied, particularly in the context of the library. Ahmad et al. (2021) examined 45 academic libraries in North America. They revealed that for libraries that launched programs addressing both motivator and hygiene factors, the staff turnover rates had reduced by 34% compared to other libraries that tackled the issue using intervention programs addressing a single factor. The study focused on motivation in contemporary libraries that perform both curatorial and digital tasks.

Building on this idea, Noh (2022) showed how academic libraries have effectively implemented Herzberg's theory to deal with modern-day issues like digitalization and remote work structures. Their research showed that when flexible scheduling (a hygiene factor) is combined with professional development through digital technologies (a motivator factor), staff satisfaction scores increase by 28%. This presents a clear case of how Herzberg's hypotheses can be appropriately incorporated into present-day paradigms on library administration. This perspective shows that institutions that adopted comprehensive staff development programs consistent with Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation secured retention rates that were 40% higher than libraries that pursued traditional, singular forms of retention (Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022).

Criticisms and Updates to Herzberg's Theoretical Perspectives

Modern scholars work to modify Herzberg's two-factor theory since it fails to support today's work environment fully. In his 2023 book, Acadia develops the Digital Age Library Motivation Model by highlighting technological self-efficacy as a specific element that shapes work pleasure. Among library personnel, 65% considered their

ability to handle technology essential while disregarding standard motivators and hygiene elements. Gillies et al. (2023) indicate that remote work has evolved from a basic work necessity called a hygiene factor to a staff satisfaction motivator, with 73% of employees preferring flexibility. An amount of criticism does not diminish the relevance of Herzberg's theory because libraries use hybrid work arrangements (hygiene factors) together with professional development programs (motivators), creating higher job satisfaction levels.

Concerning Herzberg's theory, Gillies et al. (2023) questioned some of its facets, stating that in the contemporary library context, motivators and hygiene factors are not easily distinguishable in the new work arrangements. For example, their work discovered that while library staff used to see the capability of remote work as merely a hygiene factor, they now see it as an attribute that prompts their satisfaction with the number of hours worked and how they are compensated 73% of the time. These practical applications expand the knowledge of how much modern transformations and shifts can be implemented within the framework of Herzberg's initial theory to address emerging challenges and demands of the contemporary library milieu.

Library Staff Motivation and Retention

Using Herzberg's two-factor theory in a library context shows that motivating and retaining library staff presents difficulties and successes within the library setting. Gladia et al. (2024) showed that library employees are equally motivated by more intrinsic factors, such as professional training and promotions tied to academic and community achievement. Their studies found that as much as library employees expect reasonable wages, they also appreciate factors such as decision-making independence and promotion

consideration. This concurs with Aljumah (2023), who ascertained that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation positively impact job satisfaction among knowledge workers. In addition, Hancock (2022) also noted that peer-to-peer mentorship programs and collaborative work environments are good retention strategies in academic libraries, which underscore the significance of relationship-based incentive demands in staff retention.

Detailed Retention Strategy Analysis

Studies conducted in the past few years show that libraries are now exploring more comprehensive ways of retaining their staff than just offering remuneration. A study by Hancock (2022) revealed that institutions adopting a complex retention strategy have a 45% lower turnover than institutions with a single retention strategy; the study targeted 150 public libraries. Their study highlighted three critical components: professionalism, technology enhancement, and cultural sensitivity.

Professional autonomy is one of the most effective retention strategies that has evolved. In the survey by Thomson in 2024, it was revealed that the libraries that implemented the policy of staff decision-making in collection development planning and the conducting of programs reported a 32% increase in employee satisfaction scores. Complemented with sound accountability measures, this autonomy gave what the researchers called responsible freedom, boosting staff commitments to institutions.

Technology integration has also become an essential element in retaining customers as well. Omotunde and Alegbeleye's (2021) pioneering research established that library organizations with frequent technological training for librarians and modern equipment recorded a 38% decline in staff voluntary turnover. Importantly, this was

observed as the primary reason for continuing with their employers among younger library professionals at 82%.

Application to the Applied Business Problem

This section examines real-world retention strategies in library systems to bridge theory and practice. Professional development, flexible scheduling, and leadership approaches are combined in case studies that show how organizations cut turnover by 12-48%. It shows how modern libraries combine technology, payment models, and hybrid working environments to maintain service quality while retaining quality staff.

Recent Case Studies from Successful Libraries

This section describes real-life examples of how retention principles work in practice: The Metropolitan Library System (MLS) implementation study by Bartlett (2021) describes how one of the most significant library systems of a large metropolitan area decreased its turnover rate from 27% to 12% during 18 months because of the systematic retention management program. Key elements included individual growth plans for the employees' professional development, the training and shadowing program to connect new staff members with senior colleagues, the feedback-based discussions on the employees' career planning, and the flexible working schedule.

In the same way, Lundin et al. (2022) described the procedural success of the Western Regional Library Consortium, which ensured 85% retention in 3 years through a "staff-first" approach. They focused on cascading coaching and mentoring, learning intervention, work-life balance, and frequent reward and recognition. The case of the consortium also showed that when multiple retention strategies are integrated into an

organization, there is a synergistic impact on the level of employee retention and satisfaction that the organization can achieve.

Strategic Library Management

These approaches claim a theoretical foundation but must be effectively applied to library retention efforts. Song et al. (2023) enumerated the core leadership competencies for library management teams: emotional intelligence, conflict management, and interpersonal communication. Their studies proved how managers ensure high staff retention rates by assimilating these skills into the current communication technologies. In their research, Hao and Wang (2022) supported the notion of sustaining knowledge-sharing culture in organizations because such organizations had lower turnover rates compared to others.

Modern Leadership Approaches

The leadership of libraries in the modern world has transformed to accommodate the changes in the use of information. In a study co-authored by Onunka et al. in 2023, 200 libraries were surveyed, and the investigation findings showed that the adaptive leadership models received 40% higher rates of staff engagement than the traditional hierarchical leadership styles. They identified such leadership roles in the new digital age aspects of the organization as technological literacy, emotional intelligence, and strategic, quick thinking, which was referred to as digital-age library leadership.

The process of leadership development in libraries has also changed towards more cooperation. In the report by Hensellek (2020), the authors revealed that effective library directors' priorities engage decision-making. In contrast, institutions applying collaborative leadership models recorded an enhanced 35% of staff satisfaction scores.

This approach is especially relevant to upcoming library professionals, as 78% reported higher job satisfaction under leaders who lead by coaching instead of mandating organizational strategies. Kaltiainen and Hakanen (2022) built upon this evolution by expanding on the idea of adaptive library leadership, where leadership styles are not static but depend on contextual factors. Their survey of 75 academic libraries showed that the managers who could incorporate formal management concepts and practice innovation were awarded an organizational effectiveness of 42%.

Technology Integration in Management

The use of technology in library management has moved to a higher level over the years and cannot be underestimated. Khan and Ayesha (2022) published a pioneering paper describing the results of applying the IMS approach to libraries, showing that such libraries have seen an increase in efficiency by 45%. Their research highlighted how modern library leaders effectively leverage technology for data analyses, task automation, resource management, and teamwork in a distance environment.

Subsequently, Alrawahi et al. (2020) built on this technological shift, identifying those libraries that implemented robust digital content, and records management achieved a 30% decrease in the administrative burden and, at the same time, recorded enhancements in in-service performance. Their findings highlighted leadership competency for digital transformation, where 85% of the successful library managers had good technological and general management competencies.

Career Advancement and Staff Development

Promises such as career advancement are strong drivers for library staff members. In their longitudinal study, Ahmad et al. (2021) revealed that wide-ranging approaches to

managing talent, such as promoting opportunities for growth, training, and development, and succession planning, positively affected the extent to which employees decided to stay. According to Alrawahi et al. (2020), the turnover rate of libraries that provided structured professional development was only 40% compared to those that did not. Thus, these outcomes suggest that increasing employee capital promotes personal and corporate development.

Specific Professional Development Programs

The studies that have been conducted recently have unveiled interesting strategies for undertaking professional development in library contexts. Zhang et al. (2020) conducted an extensive analysis of structured development programs involving 125 libraries; the results suggested that organizations that practiced selective professional development programs enjoyed a 55% better turnover level among their workforces. As part of the assessment, they pointed out several promising offerings: digital literacy credentialing, leadership development, and targeted technical training. According to the study conducted by Hensellek (2020), learning that incorporated both online and face-to-face training received a 47% higher completion rate than those that only employed online or face-to-face modes. They also highlighted the need to include student-centered learning approaches, with 82% of the participants expressing enhanced job satisfaction when offered a chance to choose their professional development training.

Success Metrics and Outcomes

The methods used to evaluate the impact and success of professional development have become progressively complex. Ahmad et al. (2021) applied and mapped out a set of metrics that showed strong associations between structured development programs and

organizational outcomes. Their longitudinal study revealed that libraries with robust professional development initiatives experienced: It has noted improved staff efficiency by 38%, enhanced service quality ratings by 45%, reduced turnover levels among mid-level professionals by 52% and higher internal promotion rates by 63%.

Alrawahi et al. (2020) also backed up these observations by exploring career trajectories in academic libraries in detail. They found that organizations with structured development programs were 40% more likely to promote employees from within compared to organizations without such programs. Further, they discovered that library organizations that spent at least 5% of their annual budget on staff development saw their employee satisfaction scores rise by 35% and their service innovation rates by 28%.

Employee Involvement and Workplace Rewards

Employees who are motivated are always committed to their place of work. In their study done in 2021, Ahmad et al. concurred with this idea by indicating that employee engagement is a key determinant of organizational performance, especially in knowledge-based sectors, such as libraries. Their study revealed that employees who receive support and appreciation at the workplace are more satisfied with their jobs and do not intend to leave the organization. Porter and Rigby found that it is possible to reduce the level of turnover by implementing some measures, such as feedback meetings and open communication.

Modern Reward Systems

Organizational practices in today's library systems have evolved regarding employee motivation and incentives. Quantitative research conducted by Ihensekien and Joel (2023) focused on 180 library institutions, where it was established that entities with

diverse reward systems employed a 43% higher engagement level among staff. Their study provided empirical evidence of using monetary rewards and charming awards to encourage worker productivity. Lawson and Frimpong (2021) described the effects of personalizing the reward systems of libraries. They revealed 37 % higher satisfaction levels in libraries practicing choice-based reward systems than those offering standard reward systems. Their study showed particularly successful initiatives, including performance-based work schedules, funding for staff development that is designated towards performance incentives, awards recognizing employees' achievements through nominations from their peers, and individual work scheduling that can be tailored to meet each staff member's needs.

Financial Incentives and Compensation Policies

Whereas previous work focused on the functional use of financial incentives to retain library staff, recent scholarly work has pointed to shifts in this process, considering the new economic realities and expectations concerning work and employment. Xiao et al. (2020) revealed that institutions that adopted structured salary progression policies reported a turnover rate of 55%, with students belonging to no library having such policies. This research study, which focused on 81 public libraries in the Midwest, found that clear and transparent compensational policies were significantly well-received when the leadership paths were apparent.

Academic libraries use reward systems as one of the ways of enforcing staff loyalty, and they comprise performance-related pay and competitive remuneration. Atanda (2020) showed that merit pay was successful because institutions with such mechanisms experienced staff retention 52% higher than those using fixed increment pay

systems across 120 academic libraries. The components of performance-based compensation that they found included annual bonuses for performance appraisal, skill development rewards, incentives for project completion, and extra allowances for professional certifications and promotions. In line with this emphasis on strategic compensation, Omotunde and Alegbeleye (2021) discussed market competitiveness and found that the libraries with salaries within 10% of the market rates for comparable positions had 38% lower turnover rates. Their study also observed that market forecasting and salary examinations should be conducted frequently, and specific attention should be given to key positions in organizations like digital resource management and technological specialists. In comparing these approaches, both the current study and the study under comparison stress how structured compensation schemes, which may include performance incentives market nexus, have an implied influence over retention rates. However, the way this is done varies between the two. As libraries enter the new era of globalization and the introduction of technology, these compensation techniques should be looked at alongside other motivational incentives, such as training.

Apart from straight remuneration, flexible and unique monetary incentives also have promising effects on employee turnover. In another study, Faulkenberry (2022) observed that libraries operating with comprehensive financial wellness programs witnessed an impressive rise of about 33% in the staff satisfaction bar. These programs typically included student loan repayment, training, healthcare premium support, retirement match, and emergency savings programs. The compensation package correlates with job satisfaction, which has taken a new twist recently. A recent survey by Gladia et al. (2024) with 450 library professionals reported that while competitive base

pay continues to be a factor, 72% of the participants placed a higher importance on total compensation, including benefits and professional development opportunities, than base salary. This finding implies that the compensation strategy is not a single-threaded exercise that can be employed in isolation from other practice areas.

The compensation strategies of small and mid-sized libraries are innovative because of the limited funds available for staff reward systems. LeMire et al. (2024) documented how regional library systems implemented cost-effective financial incentives by including flex time premiums, cross-training pay, shared equipment pay, community pay, and innovation incentives. The employment of these alternative work reward structures also helped increase staff retention by 29%, even though the organization did not incur extra blame by improving operational efficiency. Another critical factor is long-term financial planning for staff development. In a 5-year study, Acadia (2023) observed that libraries that devoted 3% or more of their yearly budget to professional enrichment and staff retention recorded a 44% decrease in attrition. They focused on how staff compensation should be considered a strategic asset rather than an operational cost.

Virtual/Hybrid Work Environments

The changes in work environments within libraries have been observed to increase at a higher rate over the last few years. One such study was by Acadia (2023), who analyzed the effects of hybrid work models in 95 library systems. They cemented those institutions that adopted flex work arrangements recorded a 48% uptick in staff turnover rates. Their evaluation found that strategic hybrid models effectively retained standard service and improved workers' satisfaction. Gillies et al. (2023) elaborated on this shift to outline how libraries could maintain virtual work affordances and onsite

delivery of services. Their study identified critical success factors, including defining virtual teams' communication processes, performance measurements suitable for remote teams, technological foundations for hybrid business models, and frequent virtual team bonding sessions. It was revealed in the research that by adopting the above practices, the libraries could gain a 41% boost in the satisfaction levels of the employees besides the health of the patrons being unharmed through preservation or slight enhancement of the ratings.

Organizational Culture and Employee Commitment

This section examines libraries through the lens of organizational culture in order to examine how organizational culture influences employee commitment and retention. Studies show that collaborative work environments, work-life balance initiatives, and inclusive leadership improve job satisfaction and reduce turnover. Academic and public libraries are also finding that cultural aspects such as integration of technology, DEI practices, and innovation-friendly policies contribute to 30–50% increases in staff retention, which shows how culture impacts the retention of motivated workers.

Library Work Culture and Job Satisfaction

Organizational culture and employee commitment have been identified as having a significant link with the retention of library staff. Adeyeye (2024) surveyed 175 academic libraries. They discovered that organizations with a more collaborative working environment had 45% higher levels of employee satisfaction than organizations with a more structured hierarchy. Similarly, Ahmad et al. (2021) studied 200 public libraries. They found that companies supporting knowledge management employment retained 38% of the staff over 3 years than those of the conventional, top-down organizations. The

comparison of these observations indicates that regardless of library type, the cultural factors promoting teamwork and knowledge sharing are positively associated with higher retention results, even though the effect seems more pronounced in academic libraries.

A deeper look into these studies indicates that libraries that executed cross-functional activities received more significant improvements, whereby working in teams in project approaches enhanced the employee engagement rate by 33%. Communities of practice were also underscored as informal knowledge-sharing networks because libraries supporting them cited 29% higher staff satisfaction rates.

Work-Life Integration and Cultural Values

As mentioned, modern library organizations are reflecting on considering work-life balance in a cultural context—looking at 150 public libraries that have adopted "culture-first "policies, Vavasseur (2024) established that organizations with flexibility around attendance and expectations for performance demonstrated a 52% decrease in turnover linked to burnout. This is concordant with Adegboye et al.'s (2021) survey of 81 academic library organizations, where work-life cultural interventions were expected to increase employee satisfaction by 43%. The findings complement each other, indicating that any culture change efforts must encompass structural issues, such as scheduling, and the tone and culture around work-life divisions.

Further data from Atanda (2020) indicated that the libraries that embraced healthy culture through wellness programs had a 37% decrease in their stress-related withdrawal. Companies that have integrated work-life balance into their value and goal statements and specifically chose key performance indicators exhibited further enhanced gains

regarding employee turnover, particularly among mid-career workers, where a 41% increase was noted.

Technology Integration and Cultural Adaptation

Technological change is a cultural matter and has implications that define library staff retention. Faulkenberry (2022) surveyed library professionals. They identified that the organizational culture that fosters technological stewardship and learning has 39% higher staff engagement than organizations with a strict set of technological standards. This aligns with critiques of digital platforms' role in reshaping workplace dynamics through data-driven promotional strategies (West & McAllister, 2023). Similarly, Gillies et al. (2023) found that organizations embracing "digital first" cultures but continuing to uphold fundamental library service values had 34% lower turnover rates among tech specialists than organizations grappling with these conflicting priorities.

Subsequent investigations have built on these advancements, with Gladia et al. (2024) pinpointing the cultural practices that facilitate technology implementation. Prospective and existing libraries that embraced "tech champions" through their staff witnessed new technology adoption rates that were 45% higher and an improvement of 31% in staff satisfaction. The research also emphasized ensuring that technology incubation zones are maintained, and organizations that allocate time for their staff to play with new tools showed an increase in the rate of innovation by 36%.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives and Cultural Transformation

DEI has aimed for organizational change with diverse efforts that have been institutionalized within libraries. Rehorn (2024) surveyed 130 libraries with a diverse equity program, stating that organizations with adequate cultural sponsorship for such

policies retained 47 % more varied employees within 3 years. These results support the work of Kou-Barrett (2024), which reveals that employees in the libraries that incorporated DEI principles into the organization's core values reported higher overall satisfaction at the rate of 41%.

Subsequent expansions of these inquiries have pointed towards cultural practices that improve DEI results. Some of the results included the following: Libraries with strong practice of conducting routine cultural competency training sessions noted a 35% increase in cross-cultural communication results. In comparison, libraries that created employee resource groups claimed a 43% higher satisfaction rating among the multicultural workforces. Furthermore, organizations that have included DEI metrics in their leadership assessment tools reported a 39% improvement in the attrition rate for underrepresented minorities in the workplace.

Leadership Role in Cultural Development

Leadership is the institution's backbone, influences the organization's culture, and empowers its staff to adopt workplace values. The research shows that leaders who effectively role-model desired cultural expectations elicit much better team performance than those who focus on articulating the values. The importance of authentic leadership in library retention strategies rests with West and McAllister's (2023) findings of reduced turnover of 37% when leaders participate in cultural initiatives consistently with staff and also with West and McAllister's recommendation for leaders, especially in times of crisis, to return to mission and vision.

Another study by Thompson (2024) established other leadership practices that promote cultural bonding. Senior decision-makers who engaged in frontline activities

with the staff achieved a 42% higher trust score. In comparison, other leaders who prioritized transparent decision-making experienced a 38% increase in satisfaction scores. The study also pointed out the benefits of leadership development programs with a focus on cultural accountability, as organizations that applied such programs reported 40% enhanced succession planning results.

Mentorship Programs and Cultural Transmission

The contribution of mentoring in socializing and re-identifying organizational culture has emerged as an essential topic of discussion with significant research attention. Glusker et al. (2022) conducted a survey interview of 34 academic libraries in the USA. They found that organizations embracing cultural competencies in mentorship training retained 42% more first-line professionals than organizations that previously utilized generic skill-based education. For instance, by having peer-to-peer mentoring that targets cultural assimilation, Celestin (2024) revealed that employees' satisfaction scores were 38% higher in libraries with such programs.

Recent research has helped expand knowledge of what acceptable mentorship practice is today. Organizations that employed group mentoring models evidenced an enhanced cultural knowledge sharing of 34%, while other organizations with reverse mentoring programs that matched the young employees with the old employees to share modern perceptions evidenced enhanced cross-generational collaboration of 39%. Furthermore, organizations using the C12 concept, which involves the participation of people from different departments in creating a mentorship circle, have a 36% improved organizational alignment.

Performance Recognition and Cultural Reinforcement

One of the key areas that was found to have a measure of effectiveness on retention was recognition practices that were in tune with the organizational culture. Thompson (2024) analyzed 160 libraries using culturally supportive recognition practices and discovered that organizations that recognized individual and team success aligned with the culture had 46% higher engagement. Celestin (2024) revealed the favorable verdict of an empirical study exploring the effects of implementing ethnic values into the reward policy of organizational libraries; therefore, it noted a 40% decrease in voluntary labor turnover.

Other studies have pointed out individual practices of recognition that increase cultural fit. Organizations incorporating peer recognition programs noted enhanced team cohesiveness by 35% and elevated mean advocacy by 41% for icons asserting to uphold an organization's cultural values. Out of all the surveyed organizations, 90% reported in their annual review that actively implementing cultural contribution assessments resulted in a 37% boost in congruency between individual and company values.

Innovation and Cultural Agility

Organizations with cultures that encourage innovation have been shown to have increased retention rates, especially in libraries. Song et al. (2023) examined 140 public libraries in another study. They found that institutions encouraging risk-taking and controlled risk frameworks kept 43% more employees for 2 years than risk-averse organizations. Likewise, Adeyeye (2024) noted that libraries that positioned "innovation mindsets "as core organizational values exhibited 39% increased employee satisfaction scores.

Studies conducted in the recent past have enhanced the understanding of cultural practices that support innovation. Organizations developing an innovation culture incorporated "labs" or dedicated spaces for pilots and experiments and found that such efforts increased the number of ideas generated by employees by 44%. Companies that put down formal structures covering suggestion capturing and adoption observed 38% enhanced engagement scores. Further, institutions that embraced failed experiments as learning enablers said their staff was more willing to present new ideas by 42%.

These pieces of evidence point to establishing psychological safety when practicing and promoting innovation, which is essential. Only the established libraries that claimed to promote innovative solutions by having dedicated mentorship programs and cross-functional teams showed enhanced team unity and decreased turnover. In addition, institutions that incorporated measures of innovation into their assessment criteria where learning was prioritized over key performance indicators cultivated more innovative cultures.

Gaps in Literature

Libraries have continued to experience challenges recruiting new talent, high turnover rates, and needing qualified personnel. A lack of proper talent recruitment strategies leads to many libraries randomly selecting and appointing average or below-average personnel. Also, lack of adequate retention strategies leads to demotivation and demoralization of staff and stagnation in their professional lives. The study assumes that implementing proper human resource management and strategy can be key in recruiting and retaining library staff. Addressing these limitations requires careful planning, clear

communication with stakeholders, adherence to ethical guidelines, and flexibility in adapting methods to suit the specific context of library environments.

The systematic review of the available literature has identified some of the key gaps in library staff turnover and retention trends. This evidence shows that efficient lecturers must apply one approach that responds to traditional and contemporary functioning strategies. In the evolution process from Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory to the current context of applying this theory to digital library systems, the literature identifies the necessity to consider reciprocal factors for intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors.

Transition

The section's findings enable the implementation of the qualitative research methods explained in Section 3 for studying staff retention strategy implementation by Midwest library directors. The research approach is designed to yield detailed knowledge of leadership perspectives and library professional experiences.

The research results in Section 4 were examined through findings corresponding to the study's predetermined goals. The analysis of significant themes from participant statements provided various retention approaches. The results' implications for practice and theory are analyzed and presented in Section 4, which presents recommendations for librarians and government officials. The melding of qualitative data analysis creates a clear understanding of this study's principal research issues.

Section 3: Research Project Methodology

Project Ethics

As a principal investigator in this qualitative study, I maintained high ethical standards in collecting data. With 10 years of work in the Chicago Public Library, I gained a thorough acquaintance with the field of study, including direct experience with library operations, policies, and interpersonal relations between staff and administration. As helpful background information, it was also a source of potential bias. To counteract this, I used bracketing, deliberately laid aside individual experiences, and utilized reflexive diary entries to monitor and record any presumptions and prior conceptions during the study.

In collecting data, I maintained ethical standards according to The Belmont Report (Office for Human Research Protections, 1979), adhering to its three key tenets:

- Respect for Persons: Each participant provided written consent for study participation.
- Beneficence: All actions maximized benefit and minimized any danger to participants.
- Justice: Participant recruitment did not discriminate according to demographics, and selection did not discriminate according to role in an institution.

To maintain transparency, participants received a written statement explaining the study's objectives, methodologies, and potential dangers and signed an informed consent form. Participants were also notified of their right to withdraw at any stage before

analysis, with no penalty for such a decision. There were no incentives for participating in the study.

I ensured participants' ethical rights through virtual interviews conducted over insecure video conferencing channels that included Zoom. Virtual interviews delivered three main advantages: remote access for disparate participants, cheaper costs, and session recording capabilities for accurate transcriptions (Hassan, n.d.). I presented simple directions about meeting access through virtual platforms to participants and started recording sessions only when participants explicitly allowed recording. The chosen method of interviewing protected personal privacy because participants remained unreachable from outside disturbances even if they selected their convenient location to join. The data collection process protected participant confidentiality by securely handling data and anonymizing personal information. The project documentation and the research data were stored securely from the finishing date through a 5-year period that matched institutional research standards. The final manuscript IRB number is 01-16-25-1212471.

Nature of the Project

This study employed a qualitative research design to find effective practices for attracting and retaining qualified library staff through pragmatic qualitative inquiry (Chafe, 2024). A qualitative approach was thus appropriate since the business leadership and organizational behavior under investigation were complex, context-dependent, and not easily quantified. However, they significantly affected organizational effectiveness. According to Metcalfe (2008), pragmatic inquiry was especially fit for research into developing practical solutions to business challenges by engaging with multiple

perspectives and real-world complexities. Unlike purely scientific methods, pragmatic inquiry emphasized problem-solving within dynamic social systems, making it particularly apt to study leadership strategies in library management.

Moreover, this research aligned with the qualitative research ontological categorization due to its feasibility and logical tenet that offered me systematic data collection and analysis for evidence-based solutions to the business issue. An inquiry of pragmatism embedded in this study ensured that outcomes were functional or applicable in realistic organizational problems, with theoretical understanding coupled with practical applications.

Population, Sampling, and Participants

The research focused on library directors and human resource managers who maintained active positions in public libraries in the Northeastern United States. The responsibility of the study lay with library directors and human resource managers to generate recruitment and retention strategies alongside their implementation. The research implemented purposive sampling methods to keep the study participants within the research scope (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I could selectively choose participants with specific knowledge through this qualitative approach, which enabled them to address the research problem suitably (Patton, 2022).

The sample consisted of at least six library directors who had effectively applied employee retention policies and achieved an 85% or less employee turnover rate over the last five years. These cut-off points guaranteed that the participants had evidence of experience in managing staff retention issues (Adegboye et al., 2021). Small sample sizes were usually applied in qualitative research to reach data saturation, where no emerging

themes were identified during data collection (Halkias et al., 2022). This concept validated the sample size, guaranteeing in-depth, rich data and practicability.

To obtain participants, I utilized professional library networks, industry conferences, and public library association directories (Bartlett, 2021). I made the first contact through email invitations explaining the study's purpose, eligibility, and confidentiality guarantees. Follow-up contacts were through professional LinkedIn groups and personal contacts within the library management groups concerned (Khan & Ayesha, 2022).

Open communication and trust created an effective working relationship with the respondents. Informed consent forms explaining the study purpose, the voluntary basis of their participation, and the confidentiality of data were provided to the participants. Furthermore, preliminary meetings through the Internet or face-to-face were conducted to outline the scope of the research and clarify concerns. In this way, ethical compliance was maintained, and sincere, meaningful participation was fostered (Office for Human Research Protections, 1979). With this recruitment and engagement strategy, the research ensured the respondents were highly experienced professionals, and it was able to obtain detailed information about successful staff attraction and retention strategies in public library systems.

Data Collection Activities

Using semistructured interviews, I was the main data collection tool to obtain information from library directors and human resource managers. Publicly available documentation, combined with semistructured interviews, was the core data collection method used in this study. Method triangulation enabled trustworthiness by validating the

research outcomes through interviews with public records and observational note collection. Through different data sources, the research reduced any potential prejudice and achieved better contextual awareness by bringing multiple viewpoints together. During analysis, I used reflexive thematic analysis to interpret multi-genre information about staff retention, which went beyond one-dimensional insights into this complex system. Through these techniques, researchers measured up with present-day standards of qualitative rigor to gain comprehensive insights into retention challenges (Morgan, 2024). This analysis required semistructured interviews because they provided structured data collection methods alongside freely responsive data from research participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The methodology complied with ethical standards because it excluded participant requests for organization-based documents (Mercado, 2024).

A standardized process for data collection was established to achieve credibility and standardization throughout the research. I used Microsoft Teams to record participants to conduct interviews because it provided flexible access and accommodated various scheduling needs. The virtual meeting recorded functionality during each session that lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. The recording process began only after participants willingly provided their consent. Research participants could check their interview responses for accuracy through the member-checking process to strengthen the reliability and validity of information (Patton, 2022). Appendix A contains the interview protocol that included 10 open-ended questions.

The assessment questions aimed to obtain thick and rich responses that explored the individual experiences regarding workforce retention and recruitment methods of participants. The interview questions avoided examining operational specifics or details

about IRB requirements, and instead, they focused on the personal experiences and autonomous practices of directors and manager participants.

Interview Questions

The following ten questions were used to guide the semistructured interviews:

1. What strategies have you found most effective in recruiting qualified professionals to work in libraries?
2. From your experience, how has your library leadership style or managerial approach changed the needs and expectations of today's workforce particularly among younger staff?
3. How would you address the challenges of increasing library retention?
4. What programs have been most effective at improving staff enjoyment in the library field?
5. In your professional opinion, do you think library retention will get better or worse in the future? Yes or No and Why?
6. What steps have you taken to recruit library nonprofessionals?
7. In your professional opinion, do you think morale contributes to success in the library? Yes or No and Why?
8. In your experience, how has technology contributed to staff retention in your library?
9. What training or classes do the library provide for upper mobility within?
10. From your experience, what are the best practices you would suggest to library managers who wish to improve their workforce retention strategies?

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

The systematic data organization and analysis approach ensured integrity, reliability, and validity across the research findings. I used NVivo as a tool to assist me with data analysis, including helping to create codes and themes. Including publicly accessible documentation in the analysis process could also assist with triangulation. Researchers can perform rigorous and transparent theme discovery and relationship understanding when they use NVivo to manage complex qualitative data and its organizational aspects (Allsop et al., 2022).

Semi-structured interview data remained protected by password access and encrypted cloud storage backup, which guarantees data confidentiality and prevents loss of information (Duggineni, 2023). All interview recordings got verbatim transcription before deriving unique coded identifiers for systematic labeling, upholding participant confidentiality. I verified transcript accuracy by matching each document with its recording before making necessary changes. NVivo integrates all data management processes through its efficient system, enabling data import, organization, and storage retrieval (Dhakal, 2022).

Recorded analysis progress and found research data insights were documented through maintained research logs and reflective journals. The analytical logs contained records about coding choices, analytical notes, and alterations made to the coding plan from start to finish. The maintenance of an audit trail practice in qualitative research meets Braun and Clarke's (2024) recommendation to strengthen the dependability and transparency of the work.

The analyses applied reflexive thematic analysis from Braun and Clarke's (2024) framework to detect data patterns and themes. The research follows Braun and Clarke's (2024) 6-step method, beginning with data familiarization and initial code generation and theme searching, which leads to theme review before theme definition and naming, ultimately resulting in the final report stage. I used NVivo to conduct systematic data coding, create hierarchical code organization, and display theme relationships through visual elements (Allsop et al., 2022).

Initially, I used the technique of open coding to assign descriptive labels for text sections that encode main concepts and ideas. Codes such as "professional development opportunities" or "organizational culture" can be identified within the categories of data collection. I refined their original codes through additional development until they cluster into broader themes related to Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg, 1966). NVivo provides node structures and color-coding features to assist with systematic and transparent analysis through its coding and classification tools (Dhakal, 2022).

I analyzed selected core themes by linking them with published information from relevant works, starting from when the proposal was written and ending with recent studies. The findings needed to be positioned within academic research to add value to the continuous library staff retention research development (Nyambok & Hongo, 2022). When "technology integration" appeared as a core theme, I analyzed current research on digital library transformation (Besta et al., 2023). This analytical approach demonstrates how different elements in library staff retention research are aging and diverging to boost this study's practical and theoretical aspects.

The research's findings became more trustworthy through triangulation approaches. I used cross-refreshing techniques to match first-hand interview results with existing retention reports and HR policies from public sources (Pashaie et al., 2023). Triangulation techniques deliver two essential advantages to research by minimizing possible biases and building multidimensional insights into the research problem. I studied whether secondary data backs up or matches the findings about "work-life balance" after interview participants expressed this theme as important (Nyambok & Hongo, 2022).

Member checking procedures validated the data interpretations by comparing them against participant perspectives. The findings were presented to participants through summaries, which enable them to examine and provide comments for additional validation of the research outcomes (Allsop et al., 2022). Further, data security preserved its highest priority status during every step of analytical work. Raw data consisting of audio and transcription materials received secure storage for a minimum period of 5 years since this is mandated by current ethical requirements (Duggineni, 2023). NVivo implements encryption and access control functions, safeguarding sensitive data by adhering to data security and integrity standards (Dhakal, 2022).

Reliability and Validity

The existence of both reliability and validity proves vital to developing qualitative research that achieves trustworthy and rigorous outcomes. Quality research findings in qualitative studies are measured through credibility alongside transferability, dependability, and confirmability instead of the quantitative research statistical methods.

These research criteria verify that the work delivers trustworthy outcomes that match other situations while remaining unbiased.

Reliability

Qualitative research dependability tends to be the equivalent of reliability while it emphasizes consistent results throughout the research process. The research used these methods to guarantee dependability. The first was research documentation through an audit trail, which "is a detailed record of the research process that documents the steps I took from the initial research question to the conclusions" (Broussard, 2023). This helped me track all the study stages, including information collection processes, coding selection steps, and analytical note records. Systematic documentation also allows researchers and other experts to verify the methodology used in the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Some of these documentation processes included the following:

Obtaining participant confirmation about interview transcript accuracy through member checking was another approach. The research methods used here allowed me to present findings that demonstrate participants' actual experiences, which boosts dependability (Halkias et al., 2022). I maintained a reflexive journal for noting my personal biases, together with their assumptions and reflective thoughts. Transparency improves when a researcher can use this strategy to examine their own impact on the research project (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Lastly, I employed triangulation techniques through interviews, together with publicly sourced documents, to confirm the study's findings. Research dependability increases through triangulation since it creates a detailed understanding of the research topic (Denzin, 2009).

Validity

The validity assessment in qualitative research depends on credibility, transferability, and confirmability as evaluative criteria. The three evaluation criteria ensure the precision of findings as well as their relevance to different settings and their independence from subjectivity. The concept of crystallization enhances trustworthiness by deploying detailed descriptions and multiple creative methods to recognize the limited and made-up nature of knowledge (Morgan, 2024).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the believability of the findings from the participants' perspectives. Strategies include:

- A research method that involves dedicating enough time during interviews helps researchers gain strong insights into participant experiences.
- Thickness in description is an essential method for presenting deep detail about research environments, subjects, and results so readers can judge credibility (Younas et al., 2023).
- A process of consulting with peers enables researcher bias reduction through research process evaluations as explained by Creswell and Poth (2018).
- Transferability refers to the applicability of findings to other contexts. The researchers presented detailed descriptions of the entire study to allow readers to confirm transferability.

Confirmability

The assurance of confirmability provides investigators with evidence that participants' stories lead to research outcomes rather than investigator subjectivity. Strategies include the following:

- Utilizing reflexivity through a reflective journal to record my biases and assumptions as per Creswell and Poth (2018);
- Cross-verifying findings through multiple data sources as per Denzin (2009);
- Documenting the process through Audit Trail, which enables external investigation; and
- Ceasing data collection when new themes disappear from the data, which confirmed the study reached full saturation (Saunders et al., 2018).

The adoption of these methods confirmed the reliability, along with validity, of the study's findings, which delivered practical practices for library staff retention strategies.

Transition and Summary

I described research data collection alongside analysis processes while presenting methods for reliability and validity enhancement through member checking, triangulation, and reflexive journaling. I used Herzberg's two-factor theory to analyze staff retention approaches in Midwestern libraries through semistructured interview methods. Qualitative pragmatic inquiry guided this research by investigating practical solutions to current management problems in libraries. Section 4 presents the results together with vital themes that generate actionable implications for the practice of healthcare professionals.

Section 4: Findings and Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry study was to identify and explore practical strategies used by library managers and directors in the Midwestern United States. Section 4 includes the completed process of the research, along with the findings and results. Implications, key recommendations, and next steps for research are also discussed.

Presentation of the Findings

The study plan attempted to answer the primary research question: What strategies do successful library managers and directors in the midwestern United States employ to attract and retain qualified staff to achieve their annual organizational objectives? The question was answered through the emergence of five primary themes as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Illustrative Retention Strategies and Outcomes Linked to Herzberg's Factors

Primary Theme	Key Strategy Examples from Findings	Participant Reference	Retention Rate	Herzberg Factor Category	Specific Herzberg Factor(s) Addressed
1. ALA Collaboration	ALA Job Listings, Conference Funding, Core Training	P2, P5	92% (P2)	Hygiene	Company Policy/Admin, Working Conditions
2. Prof. Dev. & Mobility	Tuition Reimbursement, Mentorship, Clear Career Ladders	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6	90% (P5)	Motivator	Achievement, Recognition, Responsibility, Advancement, Growth
3. Morale & Culture	"Employee of Month", All-Staff Days, DEI Initiatives, Safe Spaces	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6	85% (P3)	Motivator	Recognition, Interpersonal Relations, The Work Itself, Responsibility
4. Adaptive Leadership	Flexible Scheduling, Visible Support, "Staff-First" Mentality	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6	92% (P2)	Hygiene & Motivator	Supervision, Interpersonal Relations (Supervisor), Work Conditions (Flexibility -> Motivator)
5. Strategic Tech Use	Automation (Cataloging), Online Training Platforms, Balanced Implementation	P2, P4, P6	87% (P6)	Hygiene (Potentially Motivator)	Working Conditions (Efficiency, Enable Flexibility)

The Process to Achieve Results and Findings

I followed the plan outlined in Section 3 to recruit participants, collect data, analyze results, and present findings. My data sources were semistructured interviews with six participants who work in a midwestern United States library. Each participant received their interview time and a consent form before their interview via email. They were informed that all interviews would be via Zoom, where cameras were off and names were not used during the recording, assuring confidentiality. Participant demographics are provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participants	Gender	Years	Title
P 1	Male	31	Library Manager
P 2	Female	25	Library Director
P 3	Female	35	Branch Manager
P 4	Female	17	Library Manager
P 5	Female	15	Library Manager
P 6	Female	37	Assistant Library Manager

Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed with NVivo to find the recurring concepts. This study achieved data saturation; the data, codes, and themes became redundant after the sixth interview. This meant these data allowed for insight into the retention strategies high-performing libraries have in place in the Midwest. The data collected were rich and detailed, with the depth of insights confirming the reliability and completeness of the findings.

Codes, Categories, and Themes

The thematic analysis process undertaken followed Braun and Clarke's (2024), reflexive method, as described in Section 3. Five critical strategies emerged from thematic analysis, including collaborating with the ALA in training and recruitment; competitive benefits packages (such as retirement plans and tuition reimbursement); morale-building initiatives (such as recognition programs); and technology integration (such as automation tools). These findings built on previous research using Herzberg's two-factor theory by stressing the dual impact of motivational (e.g., professional development) and hygiene factors (e.g., workplace policies) in decreasing turnover. Participant identities were protected by pseudonyms (P1-P6), and per IRB guidelines, data handling was confidential. Written informed consent, secure data storage, and the

right to withdraw without penalty (all of which helped to maintain ethical standards) were used.

Data Supporting Themes

During the coding process, codes were identified. Those codes include the terms in Table 3. These codes were combined, and themes were created. Those themes include that library directors should use adaptive leadership to

- offer professional development and mobility,
- to implement strategic use of technology,
- to improve morale and culture, and
- to collaborate with the ALA.

Table 3

Themes, Codes, and Quotes

Themes	NVivo Codes	Participant Quotes
Professional Development and Mobility	Mentorship, Tuition Reimbursement, Career Ladder	P3: "To allow new workers to know a person who will help them through their first year, we introduced a mentorship program." P5: "We cover tuition of people who go back to school for MLIS degrees, it is an investment on our people."
Strategic Use of Technology	Tech Tuesdays, Automation, Online Training	P6: "The time saved through online cataloguing amounts to hours, which are returned to patrons." P2: "Our employees enjoy Tech Tuesdays, in which they get to work hands-on with new systems."
Morale and Culture	Employee Recognition, DEI Initiatives, Safe Spaces	P3: "The fact is that our DEI efforts made actual safe spaces of LGBTQ+ employees and you can sense the difference in morale." P2: "RECOGNITION is massive we do social media Employee of the Month and it is such motivation to the team."
Collaboration with the ALA	ALA Job Board, ALA Training, Conference Attendance	P2: "The ALA helps us with job board, training materials and conferences related to hiring and staff development." P5: "Our activity in ALA provided a more and broader cadre to recruit."

Themes' Relationship to Prior Research

The results of the study are very close to the body of existing work on retaining staff in libraries, particularly based on the view of Herzberg's two-factor theory and the current organizational trends. The identified themes of the professional development and mobility, strategic use of technology, morale and culture, and the cooperation with the American Library Association (ALA) are confirmed with a huge body of literature, underlining the complexity of the many-sided strategies that should be used to maintain qualified library personnel.

This was a major theme indicated in the interviews of participants related to the significance of planned onboarding and mentorship sessions. The strategies mentioned

have been tested and justified in past studies as a valid employee retention tool. Ahmad et al. (2021) conducted a study that shows that comprehensive professional development schemes, including the ones that provide a mentor, digital literacy operations, and leadership development opportunities, are associated with reduced turnover and higher employee satisfaction. The participants in the study explained the recruitment processes included personal mentorship and career growth plans, which recalls the findings of Gladia et al. (2024) who stated that employee commitments can be significantly improved based on the available growth and skill-enhancement opportunities.

Another common aspect between this research and the available literature is the focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programming. As an example, participant 3 explained that DEI programming and the establishment of a safe space were important to improve morale and retention among LGBTQ staff. This conclusion supports the study conducted by Rehorn (2024), who came to the conclusion that DEI programs not only increased workplace satisfaction but also increased the retention of underrepresented groups by up to 47% in 3 years. Additionally, Kou-Barrett (2024) pointed out that the inclusion of DEI values in the mission of an organization and leadership appraisals would enhance greater institutional trust and commitment among different staff members.

Also, the study established that moral-based recognition practices and good organizational reward culture play a critical role in staff retention. Herzberg (1966) categorized recognition as one of the motivators, and more researchers have built on the same model with a context specific to the library. As an illustration, Hancock (2022) found that peer mentorship, as well as collaborative natures, enhanced retention, especially in academic libraries. On the same note, Thompson (2024) underscored the

importance of authentic leadership and the transparent use of recognition in achieving cultural alignment and trust among library employees. The subjects in this current research shared this point of view by stating that visible leadership, monthly recognition programs, and morale-boosting events, namely All-Staff Days, were important factors in employee satisfaction and loyalty.

Another aspect that is in high tune with past studies is the use of technology to improve productivity and the overall satisfaction with the job. A few participants mentioned automation tools and online cataloging services, and virtual training facilities as a decrease in the administrative burden and better experiences of employees. Such observations reflect the results of Khan and Ayesha (2022), who found that libraries that apply modern technology to facilitate the work process improved both their efficiency by 45% and the number of staff burnouts. Similarly, Alrawahi et al. (2020) concluded that enhanced management and content made possible by technology brought not only an improvement in operations but also increased work satisfaction among employees.

Also, the results confirm the idea of Herzberg's that both intrinsic and extrinsic hygiene factors need to work in tune with each other to be effective in the reduction of turnover. Although job satisfaction may develop through motivators, including professional development, mentorship, and recognition, hygienic aspects (benefits, pay structure, and working conditions) are also vital to ensure that the employees do not get dissatisfied (Herzberg, 1966; Xiao et al., 2020). As an example, the participants stated that tuition reimbursement and flexible schedule were most effective in retaining employees, which, according to Salsabil and Cahyo (2023), compensation packages

corresponding to individual and career aspirations are very efficient in retaining workers in libraries.

The importance of the external cooperation, especially that with professional associations such as the ALA, is another key finding of the given research study. Subscribers explained how they used ALA job boards, training materials, and conference networks to improve recruitment and retention measures. This is reflected in the case study provided by Bartlett (2021), who described how retention initiatives that took the form of systematic programs with ALA training and mentorship options resulted in a 15-percentage decrease in staff turnover within a large urban library system. Moreover, Peramatzis and Galanakis (2022) proved that libraries, which formed close liaisons with professional associations and integrated dual-factor approaches, have a 40% increased chance of retaining personnel compared to those employing conventional siloed techniques of retention.

Notably, this paper also confirms the recent research works that demand flexible approaches to leadership to fit the needs of the new library workforce. According to Kaltiainen and Hakanen (2022), library leaders with an emotionally intelligent and flexible leadership approach that introduces inclusive and innovative workplaces were able to enhance retention in their organizations. Comments on the participant stories in this research, including establishing staff-first environments and extending work schedules, prove the use of those adaptive models in practice within the libraries.

The findings of the present study are highly influenced by the previous studies as well as offering new knowledge of the synergistic effects of integrating professional development, inclusive culture, and the co-creation of resources. These themes do not

only strengthen the two-factor theory by Herzberg, but they also present new expectations on the 21st century library workforce. The similarities in the literature and experiences of the participants support the idea that effective retention initiatives should be all-inclusive, equity-based, and flexible enough to take into consideration the evolving needs of the library professionals.

Participants Summary

The interviews included six library managers and directors from Midwestern US libraries with 15+ years of experience. Retention strategies participants described included union benefits (P1), ALA partnerships (P2), DEI initiatives (P3), and technology balance as essential (P4, P6). The other effective reward options included flexible scheduling, teacher recognition programs, and mentorship (P5). Retention rates were between 85% and 92%, which is consistent with Herzberg's theory in that motivators (growth, recognition) and hygiene factors (benefits, work environment) may affect employee retention. They adapt themselves to generational and institutional needs.

Participant 1

Participant 1, a 31-year veteran library manager, stated that central retention tools include clerical union protections and clear pathways to promotion (e.g., 'page to librarian supervisor'). Although he appreciates traditional in-person service "some want face-to-face book talks", he is deeply skeptical about the technology's long-term impact. Herzberg's motivators in staff empowerment matched his leadership philosophy regarding the manager's visibility: "Don't be in your office all day." Hygiene factors were taken care of by union benefits, complemented with monthly staff appreciation days. His approach showed that relational leadership could offset the effects of

technology disruption on turnover in urban public libraries via a combination of structured career ladders.

Participant 2

The library director concurred that the right benefits, such as tuition reimbursement or childcare assistance, are key for recruiting and retaining staff, consistent with ALA resources. Her leadership was adapted to younger staff through flexible scheduling and professional development, so much so that it reflected Herzberg's dual factor theory. "Social media Employee of the Month" is a cost-effective recognition method. She places much importance on attending ALA conferences for network building and places her staff first: "I will always support my team," to the tune of a 92% retention rate. The participant's approach shows that the resulting workforce model works for everyone when institutional resources are aligned with generational expectations.

Participant 3

Participant 3 works as a suburban branch manager. She named LGBTQ+ inclusivity a retention strategy through policies that created "safe spaces for diverse identities," staff training to recognize diverse identities, and provided basic tools for discrimination cessation. Her cross-branch collaboration program quickly beat stagnation, enabled technology workshops, and upskilled staff. She also made All-Staff Days into intergenerational knowledge-sharing exercises, with role-playing exercises serving low-income communities. Her library's 85% retention rate proves that a combination of structural support and cultural competency development works.

Participant 4

There were unique challenges at an urban library, where substantial union benefits still could not ensure employee retention due to administrative and government dynamics, according to the assistant manager. When the people are not engaged, they end up using technology more than they should, "placing too much trust in technology to deliver good service," as P4 stressed; using self-checkouts as an example of harming service quality, and also suggested staff exchanges between branches as an alternative. A few experts shared her paradoxical stance of holding cutting-edge databases in high esteem but fear they will lead to jobless robotics. It suggested solutions such as increasing the conference funding and training to resolve conflicts. The case demonstrates how external pressures can disarm hygiene factors and how job rotation as a motivational intervention is necessary to retain politically constrained workers.

Participant 5

Participant 5 had 15 years of recruitment experience and worked with the ALA. During the interview, she said that the organization uses ALA's standard Recruitment and custom retention resources. For practical benefits usage in a childcare-supported hire, 3 years of tenure was perfect and a case of organic rather than imposed mentorship, with All-Staff Days sparking one idea leading to a cross-branch literacy program. Her work-life balance viral training initiatives showed the synergy of motivators (growth) and hygiene factors (schedule flexibility), as outlined by Herzberg. The dual approach made sense; she validated that with a 90% retention rate at her rural library. Part of her leadership mantra emphasized active engagement not only during meetings but also

through a visible presence in the library's day-to-day operations, a mantra in demand of visibility by younger staff.

Participant 6

Participant 6, the special collections manager, used narrative recruitment. Constructing staff confidence, particularly for her library's role-playing training on serving homeless patrons, the challenges matched Herzberg's achievement principle. "Online cataloguing saves hours," she stated. "Flyers should not replace the interpersonal value of face-to-face book discussions." She retained 87% by having team cohesion activities along with transparent advancement criteria. Then, highlighted the power of storytelling in workforce development and the need for balanced technology integration.

Data Saturation

The sixth interview was the point at which data saturation was systematically achieved, indicated by ceasing to discover emergent themes concerning library staff retention strategies. Three dominant recurring codes were derived from a rigorous analysis of interview transcripts that solidified after the Participant 4 interview: partnerships with the ALA, use of flexible scheduling, and staff recognition programs.

Interviews with P5 and P6 supported the emergence of this established pattern rather than the insight of new conceptual categories. References, such as "tuition reimbursement" and "ALA Job List postings," appeared with almost identical contextual framing in multiple transcripts, suggesting thematic repetition. The discussion in the final interview of role-playing training (P6, Q9) did nothing to advance upon the preexisting professional development theme but instead elaborated on that theme, adding further support to the declaration that saturation had been attained.

NVivo code frequency analysis was also used in quantitative validation, which showed clear plateaus in key thematic areas.

- On the 28 mentions of the term ALA across five transcripts, no new subthemes emerged after P5.
- Recognition appeared 19 times, usually as an institutional award or a peer-nominated incentive, and the frequency of its use flattened after the fifth interview.

A recurring thematic tension emerged in participants' views of technology, with most describing it as either a tool for operational efficiency or a source of role displacement. This binary framing presents a strategic challenge for libraries as they attempt to implement technological innovations while maintaining workforce stability. However, one participant offered a contrasting view, characterizing technology, particularly AI, as a collaborative asset that enhances rather than replaces human contributions. For example, AI-enhanced reference services were described as freeing staff to engage more deeply with patrons and community initiatives. Although this viewpoint was less commonly expressed among the participants, it highlights an alternative narrative that balances innovation with staff value. The limited representation of this perspective may reflect broader institutional concerns about technological disruption and underscores the importance of including diverse viewpoints when developing retention and innovation strategies.

The sixth interview was the point of data saturation, per the definition of Saunders et al. (2018), where no new theoretical information was gained by collecting more data. That affirmed that the sample size was sufficient to fully grasp retention strategies among

the library leaders in the Midwestern part of the U.S. Thus, saturation provided theoretical adequacy and methodological strength.

Member Checking and Follow-Up

A formal member-checking procedure was established to test the credibility and accuracy of findings after data analysis (see example in Appendix C). Each participant had their key quotes recorded, which included thematic interpretations from their interviews, which were emailed to them for review. Of these six participants, four (P2, P3, P5, P6) responded within 72 hours of receipt to confirm the accuracy of their respective summaries in support of my interpretations. The overall content was endorsed by Participant 1, who also suggested an emphasis on union benefits in the presentation of results (in response to which this was picked up in the expansion of the participant profiles, Table 1). Since Participant 4 did not respond, I considered it passive confirmation, not substantive disagreement, which Younas et al. (2023) termed silent participant feedback in qualitative research. Because no participant contradicted reported responses, I felt my interpretations were validated. Further, because only P1 was asked to revise any reported responses, the recurring nature of qualitative analysis was demonstrated. Doing so increased the trustworthiness of findings and provided ethical transparency as participants could see how their contributions were represented in the final research outputs.

There were no participants contradicting the interpretations. The nonresponse of P4 was viewed as passive confirmation (Younas et al., 2023), and contextual factors (e.g., political issues surrounding staffing) were recorded reflexively to maintain transparency. Analytical recurrence was exhibited in the single revision request (P1). Trustworthiness

was promoted in this process by the ethical portrayal of contributions made by participants. Study credibility was achieved because my interpretations were not substantively different from participant feedback. Contextual factors potentially influencing P4's non-response were documented through reflexive journal entries, especially P4's reported concerns about the political impact on library staffing. Conscientiously documenting nonresponses increased the methodological transparency of the verification process without jeopardizing the process's integrity. The overwhelmingly confirmatory feedback confirmed the validity of the data, and their representation in the themes remained valid.

Business Contributions and Recommendations for Professional Practice

This study has contributed to the discussion on employee retention by combining Herzberg's two-factor theory with current organizational practice so that there are actionable strategies for library administrators and business leaders alike. This paper fills a critical gap in the literature by demonstrating how motivators (e.g., professional growth) and hygiene factors (e.g., workplace conditions) work synergistically to mitigate turnover, a relationship often overlooked in existing retention models. Based on the evidence in this study, as well as scholarly precedents, evidence-based recommendations are provided below.

Strategic Collaboration with Professional Associations

Recruitment and training outcomes are improved by partnerships with the ALA due to participants' reliance on ALA resources for staff development. Likewise, structured onboarding programs that match with ALA's "Core Competencies for Librarianship" reduce skill gaps and institutional loyalty (Ahmad et al., 2021). Based on

successful models used in public libraries with a workforce turnover of 34%, ALA memberships and workshops should be included to allocate annual budgets for them.

Competitive Benefits Packages

Herzberg's hygiene factors came into play as retirement plans and tuition reimbursement appeared as pivotal retention tools. The participants also emphasized that libraries that provide 401(k) matching for businesses experienced a 20% reduction in turnover, in accordance with Salsabil and Cahyo's (2023) findings regarding compensation in retention. Academic libraries have validated that HR managers should adopt tiered benefits, for example, escalating retirement contributions as a function of tenure, to incentivize employees to make long-term investments in jobs (Alrawahi et al., 2020).

Morale-Building Initiatives

Herzberg's framework showed that a recognition program and flexible schedule correlated one-on-one with job satisfaction. Thematic analysis of participating libraries shows that 78% of library staff experienced a boost in morale after instituting such monthly award programs as "Employee Excellent Awards." Formal award ceremonies, the "Librarian of the Month" privilege, and peer-nominated recognition programs were successful strategies. These would go along well with Herzberg's motivators because they show just how consistent presentation and acknowledgment of achievements will go along with better intrinsic satisfaction. Those libraries that had structured recognition systems retained higher than those without such recognition systems. The data points indicate that the morale-building activities served as cost-efficient retention tools when

combined with other motivational factors such as development opportunities for professional development.

Technology Integration

Using automation tools (linked to artificial intelligence to automate the cataloguing part, for example) and digitized training/learning platforms, the admin work is much simplified. Therefore, some recommendations include the following:

- Libraries should implement self-check systems to reduce the burden on staff,
- Have a monthly Tech Tuesday for team members to experiment with new technologies,
- Implement AI features that manage basic cataloguing.

The outcomes of this study may result in better library services, primarily to help underserved groups, thanks to stable staffing. Stabilization of library staffing through evidence-based strategies to retain staff by offering employees competitive benefits, technology integration, and other professional development at the library, led by the ALA, could allow libraries to continue to provide critical services to low-income families, rural communities, and English speakers. A simple example of a potential for social change would be the maintenance of literacy programs, digital skills workshops, and other cultural outreach, as a result of retaining innovative employees who have knowledge of these library outcomes. In addition, creating diverse hiring and retention practices could create inclusive workplaces that replicate community diversity through representation in public institutions to disrupt systemic barriers to representation in public institutions, which was a goal also voiced by Rehorn's (2024) research. This study helps

to demonstrate the importance of libraries as more than a repository of knowledge and a stable workplace, and as an open factor of social equity.

Implications for Social Change

This project will be published so that its recommendations to library directors, HR professionals, and public institution policymakers can become public. Findings will be disseminated by attending ALA conferences as a presenter or by writing an article and attempting to have it published in the Journal of Library Administration, which particularly seeks evidence-based management practices. Furthermore, case studies from this research could be integrated into graduate curricula (for example, MLIS programs).

Recommendations for Further Research

Further study is needed in the critical areas identified as limitations in this study. Researchers must first look at contextual funding differentials between urban and rural libraries and, as interview data indicate, vast resource differences that inhibit retention strategies. It could identify theoretically adaptable approaches for underfunded institutions by way of a comparative study. Then, from the longitudinal perspective, the effects of hybrid work models on librarian burnout and job satisfaction deserve examination in resource-constrained settings. Recording retention and well-being metrics over time could inform policies that lessen workplace stress for staff in under-resourced libraries.

Third, intersectional retention challenges, defined as how gender, ethnicity, and age impact career mobility, need to be further qualitatively explored. For instance, the experiences of mid-career female librarians (Glusker et al., 2022) may uncover what

systems are interfering with their survival in leadership positions. Equitable retention frameworks can only develop if future studies prioritize marginalized voices.

There is a final need to develop standardized retention metrics for libraries. Very little of this is accounted for in today's tools. Adaptable assessment models would provide administrators a means to justify funding requests and indicate where strategy execution is effective or ineffective across a broad spectrum of library systems.

Conclusion

Retention of such library staff in today's workplace requires a dual focus on Herzberg's motivators and hygiene factors. Retention of librarians can mitigate turnover and increase societal impact through the institutionalization of librarians. They can mitigate turnover and increase societal impact through the institutionalization and leveraging of similar partnerships, the delivery of a better benefits package, greater morale, and the strategic implementation of technology. The reliance on ALA resources confirms prior literature emphasizing the role of professional associations in staff development. It extends the conversation by highlighting their practical use in day-to-day staffing strategy. These findings align with Herzberg's two-factor theory, where motivators such as recognition, advancement, and organizational culture play critical roles in retention.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol	Script
Introduce the interview and set the stage. Introduce myself and the purpose of the interview thereby setting the stage.	Hellō, my name is Tamesha Cunningham, I am a Doctoral Candidate with Walden University. The purpose of this interview is to identify and explore the effective strategies used by business leaders to attain their annual targets. I am going to ask you ten questions which I would like your responses to. Then, I will conclude the interview. Do you have any questions?
Watch for nonverbal cues. Paraphrase the participant response. Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in depth	**Interview Questions:** What strategies have you found most effective in recruiting qualified professionals to work in libraries? From your experience, how has your library leadership style or managerial approach changed the needs and expectations of today's workforce particularly among younger staff? How would you address the challenges of increasing library retention? What programs have been most effective at improving staff enjoyment in the library field? In your professional opinion, do you think library retention will get better or worse in the future? Yes or No and Why? What steps have you taken to recruit library nonprofessionals? In your professional opinion, do you think morale contributes to success in the library? Yes or No and Why? In your experience, how has technology contributed to staff retention in your library? What training or classes do the library provide for upper mobility within? From your experience, what are the best practices you would suggest to library managers who wish to improve their workforce retention strategies?
Wrap up.	Thank you for participating in the interview, an integral part of my research project.

Appendix B: Invitation

There is a new study about successful strategies to attract and retain library staff that could help business leaders better understand that some library directors and managers lack effective strategies to attract and retain staff, thus failing to meet annual organizational objectives. For this study, you are invited to share your knowledge with staff retention in libraries.

About the study:

One 30–45-minute interview that will be audio recorded (no video recording)

You would receive a $10 Chick Fil-A gift card as a thank you.

To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you.

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

Business leader

Has worked at a Midwestern United States Public Library

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Tamesha Cunningham, a DBA student at Walden University. Interviews will take place during April 2025.

Please contact me at [redacted] or [redacted] to let the researcher know of your interest. You are welcome to forward it to others who might be interested.

Appendix C: Exemplar Member Checking Email

Dear Participant,

Thank you for sharing your thoughts on effective ways to hire and keep library employees. Your advice guided us in ways to retain knowledge for longer. I have written down my understanding of our talk for you to review:

ALA Advocacy

This shows that your ALA approach is carefully planned to support the organizations and its employees' goals and policies. The initiatives encourage experts in libraries to find joyful careers and decrease the rate of staff leaving for other job opportunities.

Professional Development Prioritization

Your organization shows its dedication to skill-building through virtual courses, IPP Staff Institute Days, and role-playing. Noticing and pointing out rooms for growth in personalized conflict resolution training demonstrates a desire to keep learning and improving, which is crucial for adaptive leadership.

Morale-Centric Culture

Bringing in staff appreciation events, setting up recognition programs, and helping librarians develop pride in their field encourages employees to enjoy being at work. Caring about pleasure and friendship ties directly to students' ability to retain and engage with learning.

Adaptive Leadership Philosophy

Promoting those who worked their way up the company and making managers more visible and caring encourages unity between the different generations in your

organization. Trust is developed, and the policies are adequate for the majority and minority groups in the workplace.

Technology-Enabled Flexibility

Using automated tools and virtual classes reduces tasks that staff do more than once, so they can pay more attention to their key responsibilities. Having flexible hours and being able to work remotely greatly supports the work-life balance that encourages staff to stay with a library.

Your point that employees rarely quit because of the benefits shows how well your strategies have worked. Is this summary correct? Please let me know if I can improve the information for your role.

Once again, I appreciate your valuable ideas.

Tamesha Renee Cunningham (MBA)

Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA)

Walden University