"I'm all for libraries"! A study of job satisfaction in Cape Town's public libraries
Paper Title

Dr Genevieve Hart

Department of Library & Information Science, University of the Western Cape

Abstract: The paper reports on a survey in 2012 of 141 staff members in the city of Cape Town's public libraries to assess their levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. After some years of neglect, South African public libraries have recently received generous government grants to expand and "transform". Cape Town's library service is the result of the merging of three separate services. Overall, the study finds high levels of satisfaction – with a sense of meaningfulness and a belief in the developmental value of libraries important factors. However, significant links were found between dissatisfaction and weaker organisational commitment. The findings provide some pointers on how the city might serve its staff better. Branch managers for example express frustration at the increase in bureaucracy, as in the cry "I'm a glorified clerk"!

Keywords: Public libraries, Cape Town, Job satisfaction, Organisational commitment, Survey

1. Introduction

This paper reports on a survey in 2012 of job satisfaction among public library staff in the city of Cape Town. Library management approved the study but attached no strings. It was undertaken as an independent university project, pursuing my teaching and research interest in human resources issues in South African libraries. It began as a project in just three library districts to be conducted by students enrolled in our senior courses. The project was then expanded to include all six districts of the library service.

Public libraries in South Africa have undergone some turbulent years since the advent of democracy in 1994. The KPMG report in 2007 for government (Department of Arts and Culture 2007) documented their deterioration and was

the catalyst for two large injections of funds from national Treasury. According to the South African National Library (2012), by 2012 the funds had built 34 new libraries, upgraded 229 libraries, and paid for 1575 staff contracts. However, the grants are not aimed at merely building new libraries but rather at the transformation of public librarianship to better serve the needs of the previously disadvantaged (Kekana 2011). Another outcome of the new funding, the LIS Transformation Charter, commissioned by the National Council of Library and Information Services (Department of Arts & Culture 2009), points to the under-use of libraries and presents a vision of explicitly developmental and educational services. It argues that, if they are to survive, public libraries must play a part in the national imperatives of reducing poverty and building social cohesion.

Although the grant has breathed new energy into the sector, it still faces daunting challenges such as:
- the insecure status of public libraries in their local authorities
- a general lack of appreciation of their value among the general populace
- the uneven distribution of libraries - with the densely populated " black" townships and former apartheid-era homelands underserved. These are the areas with the highest levels of poverty and unemployment - and related social problems
- pressures from the huge increase in under-prepared school learners' use of public libraries. In the absence of school libraries, they flock to public libraries in search of help with school projects
- inadequate human resources – in terms of numbers , qualifications, competencies, and professionalism.

The City of Cape Town Library and Information Services (COCTLIS) have not been immune from the turbulence. The Cape Town metropole, spread over 2461 square kilometers, is the result of the amalgamation in 2000 of six municipalities. The city is still demarcated by apartheid-era divisions and has high levels of poverty, with 50% of its 3.2 million people living on less than R3500.00 per month and 23.8% unemployed (City of Cape Town 2012). COCTLIS has had to merge three library systems, each with its own governance and staffing structures. The negotiating and consulting that went with this restructuring, the appointment of senior leadership and district management, the merging of library hardware and software systems, and the aligning of staff across the old systems took some years. Today it has 103 libraries, divided into six districts, which cut across the historical apartheid-era divides. Thus, a library district typically serves a mix of historically advantaged suburbs and historically disadvantaged townships, where the vast majority of poorer Capetonians live.

With the situation within the library service stabilizing, with the improving climate for public librarianship nationwide and with talk of transformed services, it seemed a good time to explore levels of job satisfaction in public

library circles.   As a librarian educator I have a vested interest in librarians' subjective experience of their work.   And of course this is of great interest to the final year students who acted as my fieldworkers.
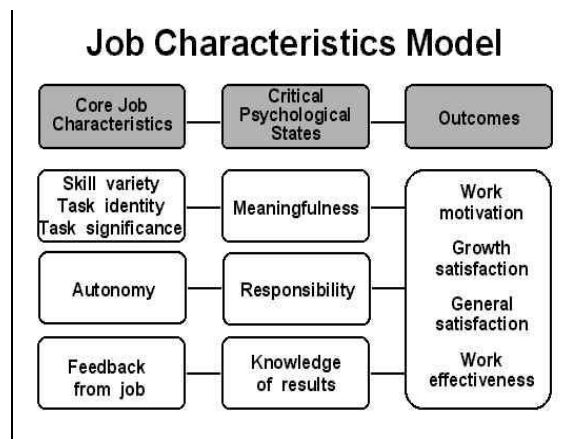
2. Job satisfaction in LIS

Job satisfaction is generally described in terms of people's emotional reactions to their jobs. Mattesona and Miller claim that "library work is full of emotion" (2012). Their research in "emotional labour" among American librarians connects librarians' workplace emotional responses to job satisfaction and job burnout.

As in an earlier study in an academic library (Hart 2010), the classic job satisfaction theories, specifically Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model (JCM) from the 1970s and Herzberg's incentives theory from the 1950s, framed the project. According to the JCM model which is presented in Figure 1, designing *enriched* jobs, which allow some autonomy, skill variety and sense of meaningfulness, is the key to job satisfaction, motivation, reduced turnover, as well as improved performance. Herzberg's two factor theory argues that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are independent phenomena; employers have to pay attention to both.   Employees might well be motivated by factors like challenge and growth; but at the same time they will be dissatisfied because of more extrinsic factors like poor pay or conflict among colleagues.

Organisational commitment is a concept closely related to job satisfaction; it refers to attachment to one's workplace. My earlier study of staff in an academic library found quite high levels of satisfaction in terms of belief in their work as librarians but rather low levels of attachment to the specific workplace (Hart 2010).

Figure 1: Hackman & Oldham's Job Characteristics Model from Steuart & Moran (2007)

There is little research in human resources issues in South African LIS. A review of the international literature on job satisfaction in LIS preceded the project. In brief, it suggests that:

- older staff are more satisfied than younger
- department heads with more responsibility are happier in their work than the staff under them
- professional staff are more satisfied
- the biggest cause of satisfaction is working with patrons
- a belief in the importance of one's job is crucial (Van Reenen 1998, Berry, Eva).

Library Journal's survey of job satisfaction in 2007 in American libraries of all types found that 85% of respondents would choose librarianship again, despite a strong thread of criticism of library management (Berry 2007).

3. Research questions and methodology

The above background and outline of HR theory underlie the questions that the project set out to explore, for example:

- How do levels vary according to various variables such as staff grade or district?
- What are the chief satisfiers and dissatisfiers?
- How committed are respondents to COCTLIS?
- Given the links between job satisfaction and motivation and performance, what pointers for library leadership and library educators can be found to increase motivation?

These questions and the data-gathering questionnaire are very close to those in my earlier study of academic librarians (Hart 2010). This was deliberate as I would like at a later stage to compare the findings across the sites. Having received the go-ahead from the Director of COCTLIS, a sample of 38 libraries to represent all six library districts was decided on and preliminary email messages were sent out to introduce the project and to ask for volunteers. The manager in each site and at least two other staff members were interviewed, using a largely structured questionnaire. The final total is 141- 76% women. They are all people working "at the coal-face", with no attempt being made to include the technical services staff, the six district managers or the senior management.

The questionnaire is designed to explore the dimensions of job satisfaction which were identified in the preceding discussion of job satisfaction theory and research. It delves into respondents' perceptions of their job and of their opportunities for growth and development. It asks them about the factors that give them satisfaction or dissatisfaction in their work. A few questions assess their commitment to their organisation. The questionnaires were personally administered, as the one-on-one interaction ensured a good response rate and the

open-ended questions, in particular. gave the student fieldworkers some experience of interviewing.

4. Discussion of findings
There is not the space in this conference report to provide details of the findings, question by question. A fuller report will be published elsewhere.

Respondents and their workplaces
The city's libraries are differentiated into three groups – each with its own standards of staff and collection provision. Both of the two large city-wide libraries are included in the study; and the proportions of community library (67%) and regional (26%) in Table 1 match the overall picture.

 Table 1: Type of Library

Type of library	Total	%
City-wide	11	8%
Community	94	67%
Regional	36	26%
Grand Total	141	100%

The grouping of respondents' libraries into disadvantaged and advantaged communities in Table 2 reflects the realities of South African cities, where poor, mostly black, people generally live in so-called townships. Rapid urbanisation in the post-apartheid era has led to the mushrooming of informal settlements or "squatter camps", usually within the established townships. The townships and informal settlements have higher rates of poverty, illiteracy, and crime; and their schools lack libraries. These are factors that could affect the job satisfaction of library staff.   As will be shown later, many respondents enjoy working in disadvantaged communities – they talk of community development and outreach and of "making a difference". One respondent in a township notorious for its gangs says: "This is a passion not a job". He claims that his library is protected by the sense of ownership that he has built among the local residents. However, there is also a strong thread of dissatisfaction at the lack of security in the responses of other respondents working in gangster-ridden areas. As one puts it, "We need more security. There are only females working. He [the guard] cannot be everywhere. I feel unsafe".

Table 2: Community Served: Disadvantaged/Advantaged

Libraries serving historically advantaged / disadvantaged communities	Total	%
Advantaged communities	51	36%
Disadvantaged	90	64%
Grand Total	141	100%

The study finds some discontent among respondents in the community libraries in disadvantaged   communities over the allocation of resources across the

classes of library. Budgets are allocated according to circulation statistics but several point out that their figures do not accurately reflect library usage. They report that they are inundated with school children from under-resourced schools in the afternoons - who are not necessarily signed-up members. Moreover, the children arrive particularly ill-prepared for library work and demand much attention. One points out: "Teachers don't go through the project with the kids, it means that they have no clue of what is expected of them."

One of the research questions asks if level of appointment and education level or qualifications affect job satisfaction. Tables 3 and 4 summarise job titles and qualifications. Library assistants are usually people without professional qualifications though some have undergraduate three-year degrees. Librarians typically are in charge of the smaller community libraries or work in the larger libraries.

Table 3: Job Titles

Job Title	Total	%
Library aide	5	4%
Library assistant	61	43%
Librarian	34	24%
Senior librarian	29	21%
Principal librarian	4	3%
Chief librarian	2	1%
(blank)	6	4%
Grand Total	141	100%

Perhaps the key point to be made from Table 4's analysis of qualifications is the dearth of postgraduate degrees. COCTLIS now insists on the four year BBibl/B.LIS degree or Postgraduate Diploma in LIS for its professional Librarian posts. The study uncovered some dissatisfaction among long-serving library assistants who argue that their experience qualifies them for promotion, for example:

"I want to grow without going to school. I want to be recognized for my contribution to the development of the library"

"They don't allow you to get training in certain things they say is for managers, though you have years of experience".

Table 4: Qualifications

| Highest qualification	Total	%
Pre-matric (e.g. ABET)	3	2%
Matric	47	33%
3 year degree : BA, BSC, BCOM etc	8	6%
Lower Diploma or National Dip LIS (para-professional qualifications, now defunct)	18	13%
4 year BBibl/B.LIS/BTech LIS or Postgraduate Dip LIS (first professional qualification	56	40%
LIS Hons	2	1%

Masters LIS	0	0
Other	4	3%
(blank)	3	2%
Grand Total	141	100 %

Thirty-five respondents (25%) report that they are studying at present – six for Bachelors degrees and 22 for a professional LIS degree or postgraduate LIS diploma. Of the 135 who gave their job titles, 69 appear to be in professional (librarian upwards) posts. The study might indicate that COCTLIS has a rather youthful workforce with 63% of the sample younger than 45 years and 71% less than 10 years in their present job.

Satisfaction levels overall and breakdown by district, community, and age
Figure 2 shows generally high levels of satisfaction: 60% saying they are satisfied and 21% strongly satisfied.

Figure 2: Overall Levels of Satisfaction
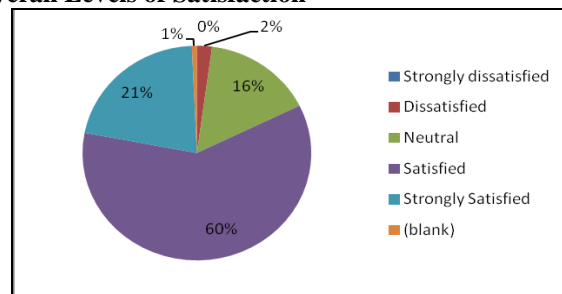
Non-parametric statistical tests (Mann-Whitney, Kruskal-Wallis and Spearman Rank Correlation) were conducted to detect differences in level of satisfaction across variables like district, class of library, age group, qualification level, and job position. No significant differences among these were found with the exception of District as shown in Table 5. The Kruskal-Wallis test reveals significant differences between the satisfaction of respondents in District 2 and District 4, at a level of p=.0081. District 2 has significantly more respondents reporting satisfaction and strong satisfaction than District 4 where far more chose to be "neutral".

Table 5: Satisfaction by District

Levels of satisfaction	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5	District 6	Grand Total
Dissatisfied	0%	3%	4%	3%	0%	0%	2%
Neutr	18%	0%	22%	25%	15%	9%	16%

al						
Satisfi ed	59%	50%	57%	63%	65%	82%	60%
Strongly Satisfied	24%	43%	17%	10%	20%	9%	21%
(blank)	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

These significant differences between the two districts emerged as well in the analysis of people's organisational commitment, which is discussed in the next section.

Organizational commitment

As mentioned earlier, job satisfaction should be distinguished from organisational commitment – people's attachment to their employing organization. The benefits of working for COCTLIS such as job security, financial support for study, and access to a range of skills development courses, are brought up in several answers to the open-ended questions. Figure 3 shows that a large majority of respondents (83%) express pride in working for COCTLIS.

Figure 3: I am proud to say I work for COCTLIS
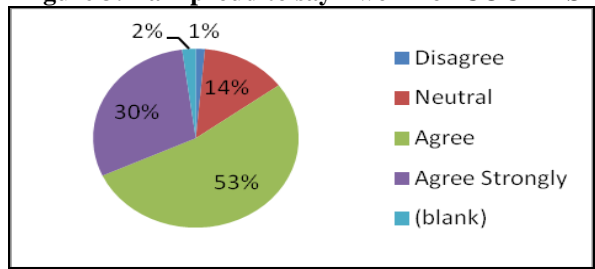
However, the questions probing commitment might reveal some ambivalence, for example:

- 25% admit they are or "might be" looking for another job
- 19% do not see themselves as working in the City LIS in three years time.

Perhaps the most telling figure is that 40% report that they would accept a job outside COCTLIS with the same pay and benefits - and another 19% reply "maybe" to this question.

Indeed, Spearman Rank testing finds significant correlations (p=.0004) between levels of agreement with the statement in Figure 3 and the satisfaction levels

depicted in Figure 2. It can be stated that people who are less satisfied are less proud of their workplace. Moreover, Kruskal-Wallis testing reveals significant correlation between "looking for a new job" and "openness to a job offer with the same benefits" on one hand and job satisfaction on the other – with levels of significance at   p=.0005 and p=.0008 respectively. Thus, it can be stated, as well, that people who are less satisfied are more likely to be restless - looking for another job and open to job offers.

Factors in satisfaction
Figure 4 presents the responses to a series of statements, each pertinent to job satisfaction. It seems that public library work in Cape Town provides a satisfying variety of tasks and also satisfying challenges. The weakest agreement is predictably over remuneration, and then for "feedback" and "independence".

Figure 4: Aspects of Job Satisfaction Rated (from least agreement to most)
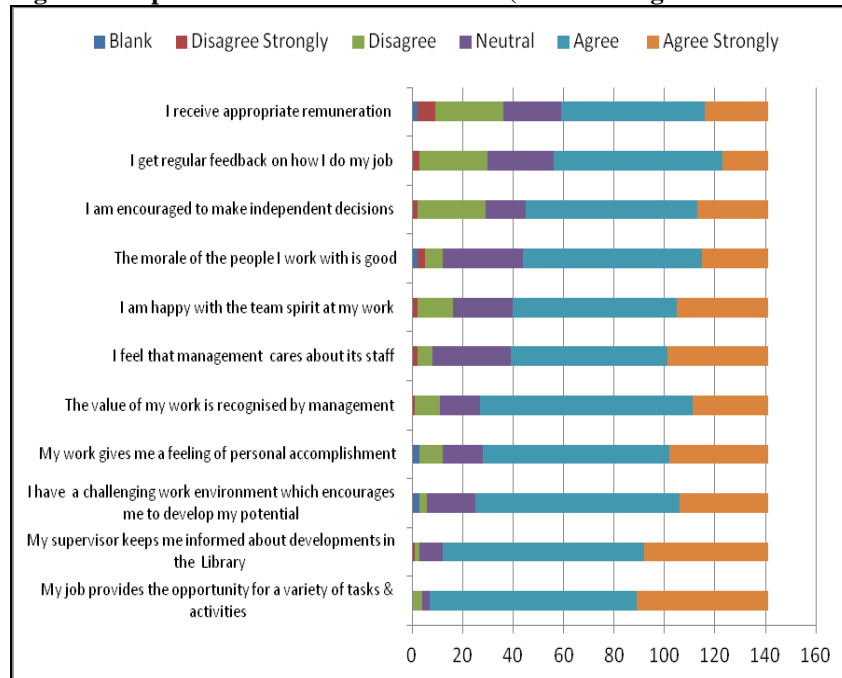
"Feedback" here refers to feedback on performance from managers but the responses to the open ended question simply asking "What do you like in your job?" highlight the importance of feedback from library users. Time and again respondents talk of the pleasure in providing a good customer service and being acknowledged by, for example, children coming in to report on good marks for a project or an adult enjoying a recommended book. Table 5 provides a thematic analysis of the responses to this question, giving the strongest six

themes. The analysis supports some of the findings in Figure 4, for example: the strong belief in the social value of the job; the satisfaction from the variety of tasks; and the opportunities for personal development and growth.

Table 5: Factors in satisfaction (top six)

Theme	Selected quotations
Pleasure in giving good service as evidenced in feedback from library patrons	Going that extra mile – seeing satisfaction on borrowers' faces Helping old people feel grateful Being able to help people, even difficult people
Community building	Opportunity to contribute to the development of my community – to me that's the core of why I love my job This isn't a job- it's a passion! Making a difference – giving courage
Interactions with diverse range of people	The interaction with people, the different races Working with all nationalities
Serving children & school learners	It makes me happy to see a child learn to love reading Being able to make a difference in children's lives Seeing children develop through reading
Day to day variety	Different types of activities like displays, shelving & holiday programmes
Ongoing learning	By nature I'm an insatiable learner , I love being exposed to new books There's always something new to learn I get to go to workshops for customer services, communication sessions.

One other quite strong thread of comment alludes to the enjoyment in librarians' core work – building good collections, organising things, and answering people's information requests. Most respondents are clearly preoccupied with day-to-day business. But three reveal wider perspectives: one expressing excitement at "global changes"; another talking of "seeing how library services have changed, basically coming into the 21st century with computers, the Internet, and the new library system"; and the third hopeful that he/she "can make a change in how libraries are defined and my small library has given me an environment to try things out".

Some responses are multi-layered. For example, several express pleasure in running special programmes like outreach projects or children's holiday programmes; but the pleasure comes from the chance they give for creativity and freedom. There are some other positive comments on being granted independence, for example:

> I've got free hand, I haven't got someone to stand on top of me to see what I'm doing

Freedom to be innovative
My seniors encourage me to do various projects.

The question "What makes you dissatisfied?" reveals a strong thread of unhappiness among librarians in charge of libraries over some loss of independence and growth in bureaucracy. They claim to be administrators rather than librarians; and they regret the loss of contact with their patrons. Table 6 categorises the eight leading themes in the responses, all with more than 15 pertinent responses.

Table 6: Leading eight factors in dissatisfaction (all with at least 15 comments)

Theme	Selected quotations
Difficult customers	The rude borrowers – I think it's because we are on the Cape Flats Rowdiness – borrowers are persistently noisy – that irritates me Gangsters loitering in the library Users are sometimes racist – they won't come to you for help and rather go to other staff of hero colour
Restrictive & uneven allocation of resources (funds & staff)	The money allocated for 3rd world libraries – not enough money for programmes No budget for outreach programmes Allocation of IT & furniture is unfair – because other bigger libraries circulate more they get more new stuff. We have people in but they don't take out books
Rigid bureaucracy & red tape	We're glorified administrators - we do everything but library work – it's all HR, labouyr relations Bureaucracy discourages me - I want to burn it Not given opportunity to concentrate on professional tasks – like leading programmes
Inadequate and unfair pay & position	I have a degree but I'm not paid for it Matric people have higher posts then Lower Diploma peopl€e
Lack of recognition	Not getting feedback from my work The city doesn't recognise people who retire after working 30 to 40 years – no thanks, no farewells.
Delinquent staff	No work ethic with colleagues Lazy colleagues and slack attitude from staff The younger staff members are noisy, even more noisy than the public
Lack of team work	Lack of honesty and staff politics Staff morale influences the atmosphere

Too much work: not enough space or staff	I feel I must clone myself for the day – you are pulled in so many directions The is always too much work

It is interesting how often responses to this question on dis-satisfiers are mirror images of those to the question on satisfiers. Thus, while one of the chief positive factors is serving the community, the leading negative factor is "difficult patrons".

Some minor themes deserve attention:
- Several complain at the lack of cooperation from teachers
- Given the quite strong comment on the pleasures of working with children and South Africa's youthful demographics, the comment by a rare specialist children's librarian is noteworthy, "Children's librarians are under stress. I find it painful to defend myself: they say you just chat"
- Library assistants' responses reveal unhappiness over promotion prospects. Several claim that experience is more useful than "books" – complaining about the policy that prevents unqualified staff, being promoted to professional posts. .

Given the upheavals of the past few years that were described in the introduction, the absence of any specific references to them is noteworthy.

5. Conclusions

Overall, the study brings good news to those concerned over the future of South African public libraries – with over 80% of the 141 respondents enjoying their jobs. The findings lend support to standard thinking on job satisfaction: with task variety and personal challenge important positive factors. A large part of the respondents' enjoyment comes from a sense of meaningfulness and a belief in the developmental value of libraries to individuals and communities. It also provides some pointers for COCTLIS on how to serve its staff better and should alert it to the links between job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Given the tight economy and restricted job opportunities, the significant links found between satisfaction and organizational commitment might well have implications for service quality. If people are unhappy but cannot leave, their capacity to deliver excellent service surely will weaken.

Of course, the study's findings cannot just be generalised to other settings. COCTLIS is a large metropolitan library service, which has successfully weathered a period of rapid change. However, the insights into public library staff might be of interest to other public library systems in South African, some of which are still in a state of upheaval.

Perhaps the best way to conclude is with the words of three respondents:

"This is a passion not a job. .. I've found my calling"

"What satisfies me? It's my work!"
"I'm all for libraries!"

References

Berry, JN. (2007). LJ series – job satisfaction: great work, genuine problems," *Library Journal* (October 1 2007).

City of Cape Town. Strategic Information, Strategic Development Information and GIS Department. (2012). City statistics. http://www.capetown.gov.za/en/stats/Documents/City_Statistics_2012.pdf. [28/03/2013]

City of Cape Town. (2012). Library and Information Services. http://www.capetown.gov.za/en/Library/Pages/default.aspx

Department of Arts and Culture. (2007). Report on the investigation into the development of public/community libraries in South Africa, compiled by KPMG Services. http://www.dac.gov.za/projects/ncflis. [28/01/2013]

Hart, G. (2010). Job satisfaction in a South African academic library in transition. *Journal of Academic Librarianship,* Vol 36, No 1, 53-62.

Kekana, P. (2011). Presentation to Select Committee on Education and Recreation16 February 2011. http://www.pmg.org.za/report/20110216-departmetn-arts-culture-library-transformation-charter-community-libr [27/09/2012]

National Library of South Africa. (2012). Community Libraries Conditional Grant. Pamphlet compiled on behalf of the Department if Arts and Culture by the National Library of South Africa. Pretoria: National Library of South Africa

Patillo, EJ, Moran, BB, Morgan, JC. (2009). The job itself: the effects of functional units on work autonomy among public and academic librarians. *Library Trends,* Vol. 58, No 2, 276-290.

Stueart, R D & Moran, B B. (2007). *Library and information center management.* 7th ed. Libraries Unlimited, Westport, CT.

 Van Reenen, J. (1998). Librarians at work: are we as satisfied as other workers? *Information Outlook,* 2, 23-26, 28