Counting the Hands: Understanding Labor, Compensation, and Ethics in Library Publishing

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Introduction

- All presenters are members of the Staffing Survey Task Force, a two-year LPC task force with a mission of drafting and implementing a survey of library publishing programs on staffing.

- Task Force will operate from 2024 – 2026

- Current Progress:
  - Survey was written, tested, and finalized
  - Survey was distributed to LPC members and other listservs
  - Data has been collected and partially analyzed.

Library Publishing Coalition

- **Mission:** The Library Publishing Coalition (LPC) extends the impact and sustainability of library publishing and open scholarship by providing a professional forum for developing best practices and shared expertise.

- Values
  - Professionalism
  - Openness
  - Diversity
  - Collaboration
  - Innovation

The Growth of Library Publishing

- 2024 marked the Library Publishing Directory's 10-year Anniversary!

- Library Publishing Survey Results:
  - o 2014 – 116 responses from 5 countries
  - o 2024 – 179 Publishers from 18 countries
  - o In 2008 alone, 14 new programs were established
  - o In 2024, 156 respondents reported a median of 2 full time employees

- *How is this happening? Library publishing is growing but who is doing the work?*

Purpose of the Survey

A two-year task force to draft and implement a survey of library publishing programs on the topic of staffing. The aim of this survey is to develop a more complete understanding of how the work of library publishing is staffed, with the ultimate goal of identifying good practices and pain points. This will be the first in an ongoing series of topical survey task forces whose work will complement the Library Publishing Directory.

The task force will survey library publishing programs about their staffing and labor practices, including job scopes, degrees and qualifications, and professional development of staff. The survey will also touch on student and contingent labor and permanent vs contingent positions. The task force will determine whether and how to incorporate questions about salaries and labor organizing. An individual survey of library publishers about their experiences is out of scope for this group but is of interest to LPC as a future project.

Survey Development

Preliminary research

- o Past directory data

- o Job board data on relevant position postings

- o ARL SPEC Kit 357: Libraries, Presses, and Publishing

Identifying key areas for survey

- o Who is doing what work?

- o How is this work being compensated?

- o How has staffing changed over time, and why?

Survey Development

- Collectively brainstormed questions that spoke to our key areas

- Developed sections on demographics, individual employees, periods of program change

- Built survey in Qualtrics
    - Limitations with the platform

- Tested for accessibility and user friendliness
    - Iterative – even after survey launched

Library Publishing Staffing Survey

- Survey open July – August 2025

- Of the universities that disclosed name and location, 76 institutions from 11 countries represented in results

Survey Preliminary Results

Themes from the data:

- Age of library publishing programs

- Average number of employees supporting programs and what their roles look like

- Perception of how resources and personnel meet program needs

- How programs are growing and changing over time

Reflections on Labor in Library Publishing

- **Value:** Some programs have expanded staff and capabilities deliberately to scale programs.
  - "Recent changes to the staffing allocation and a more conscientious division of labor has allowed both technical work and curatorial work to scale to the capacity of those responsible for that work... these changes were intentional to address making roles that were sustainable over the long term."

- **Under-resourcing:** Workload and scope grows, without additional staffing or support
  - "The publishing aspect of our jobs is only one aspect of our work, we also teach scholarly communications topics, work with open access agreements, OERs, repository work etc."
  - "Priorities keep being added" but "additional staffing is out of the question at this time."

- **Contingency:** Relying on temporary staff and/or students instead of permanent workers.
  - "We have tried a number of times for a regular part-time worker since student workers transition frequently, but that has never been approved."

Q & A