Human resources in Mexican public libraries: and exploratory inquiry

Federico Hernández Pacheco *
Diana Quezada Escamilla **

Abstract

Facing the new challenges of information society, Mexican public libraries need highly qualified human resources to satisfy demands of users and promote initiatives for ongoing improvement of library services. Library human resources are an essential part of public libraries; therefore, this research examines the human resources in several libraries of the National Network of Public Libraries in Mexico.

Keywords: National Network of Public Libraries; Public Libraries; Human Resources; Mexico.

Resumen

Los recursos humanos en las bibliotecas públicas de México: una investigación exploratoria
FedericoHernández-PachecoyDianaQuezada-Escamilla

Ante los nuevos retos que presenta la sociedad de la información, las bibliotecas públicas mexicanas requieren la participación de recursos humanos de alta calidad, que permitan satisfacer las demandas de sus usuarios e impulsar diversas iniciativas para la mejora continua de los servicios. El personal bibliotecario es un factor esencial; por ello, el interés de este trabajo es explorar el panorama actual de los recursos humanos en algunas de las bibliotecas que integran la Red Nacional de Bibliotecas Públicas de México.

Palabras clave: Red Nacional de Bibliotecas Públicas; Bibliotecas públicas; Recursos humanos; México.

Introduction

P ublic libraries play a strategic role in the construction of the social fabric of our country, in that that are required for cultural, ludic and educational development, which are key for facilitating the admittance of persons into the so-called "information and knowledge society" and diminishing prevailing inequalities.

In this sense, it is important to remember that the public library is democratic in nature par excellence, insofar as it provides informative and formative services in a peaceful context of liberty, inclusion and diversity, and within a framework that invites sharing. Regardless of technological advances, the public library will be present for many years in the daily lives of people.

It is indispensable; however, that all libraries be equipped with a proper site or infrastructure, vast information resources that match local needs, as well as with a variety of services and fair funding. Moreover, libraries must be staffed by properly trained personnel in order to ensure the efficient use and management of all media to the benefit of the library and the community it serves.

In effect, we know that the physical plant, budget, equipment, furnishings, etc. are basic resources for the proper operation of diverse public and private organizations; since without these elements it would be very difficult or impossible to carry out the tasks in workplaces where the exchange of goods and services occur, such as those interactions with users occurring in public libraries.

Nonetheless, there is a key resource upon which the proper operation of the organization depends, and this is the human resources, whose talent, work, creativity and effort can carry the organization to success or failure.[1]

Interestingly, the efficiency of the services provided by public libraries depends in large measure on the persons that work in them; since they play the preponderant role in the ongoing improvement and quality of the services of a given community.

Of course, there are diverse problems associated with human resources. In Mexico, for example, according to data gathered at the 11th Hispano-Mexican Seminar in Library Science and Documentation,[2] currently there are 16,000 persons working in the National Library Network. The federal, state, municipal and Mexico City delegational governments have the duty within their territorial authority to select, hire, train, remunerate and evaluate said personnel. Nonetheless, the situation on the ground invites further study of human resources in public libraries. For example, in state municipalities of the Republic of Mexico, personnel is rotated out or replaced every three years when municipal administrations change. The same thing happens at the state and federal levels, where the rotation of personnel is seen every six years. This means public monies must be spent to train new personnel. Most of these public library employees, who have only high school diplomas without any specialized studies in the field of Library Science, earn salaries of be-

---

1   F. Hernández Pacheco, Gestión y desarrollo de recursos humanos en bibliotecas, 15.
2   Held April 23 to 25, 2014 in Ciudad Universitaria, UNAM, Mexico.

tween two and three thousand pesos. This study also will look at aspects of how human resources are evaluated in terms of performance and salary, job valuation and profiles and how personnel is selected.

> IFLA/UNESCO Directives for development of public library services clearly points out that the management of library personnel is in and of itself a key task. All personnel must have exhaustive knowledge of the library's service policy, tasks and duties, as well as of their conditions of employment and salaries, which must be properly regulated and competitive with other similar positions.[3]

Likewise, on March 18, 2014, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published its Overview of the society, which highlights that Mexico, an OECD member since 1994, has the lowest disposable income among its member states. Similarly, the report warns that income inequality and social divisions can worsen and become chronic unless governments act quickly to promote the support of the most vulnerable sectors of society.[4]

In this regard, Article Seven, subsection X of the General Libraries Act of Mexico requires the Secretariat of Public Education "to provide entertainment and training for the personnel assigned to the public library network," tasks that have been performed by CONACULTA since its inception through its General Libraries Directorate.

Moreover, Article Eight of the Act provides that states government shall:

VI. Designate the coordinator of the State Network who shall serve as the liaison with the Coordination of the National Network of Public Libraries.
VII. Appoint, assign and remunerate the personnel within the operations of the public libraries.

It is interesting to note, however, that these statements do not serve to clarify the matter of integral development of human resources, beyond such matters as assignment, designation, training and remuneration. As such, it is important to provide ongoing training of personnel within the framework of other basic human resources functions, including as strategic planning of positions, recruitment and selection based on scholarship and academic preparation in

---

3   Directrices IFLA/Unesco para el desarrollo del servicio de bibliotecas públicas.
4   Roberto González Amador, "En México 4 de cada diez personas no tienen para comprar alimentos".

accord with job requirements. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind the analysis, description and valuation of positions; fair, equitable compensation packages, capacity and performance assessment s, and promotion of personnel/career development, effective communication and workplace climate, talent management, ergonomics and prevention of workplace risks, as well as human and labor relations, among other facets of the public library domain.

Under these premises, it is proper to consider performing a study of several public libraries belonging to the National Library Network to explore these problems and offer a series of proposals for improving human resources and, consequently, the quality of all of the processes and services of the public libraries in the country.

In this way, this study provides general answers to the following questions: What are the characteristics of personnel working in selected public libraries? What human resources preparation, labor conditions, abilities and activities exist in selected public libraries? What are the main problems associated with human resources in public libraries? To address these questions, this study has set the following objectives:

- To learn about the features of the personnel of in some Mexican public libraries.
- To describe the problems associated with human resources in Mexican public libraries.
- To offer suggestions for subsequent studies on the development of human resources in Mexican public libraries.

This exploratory, descriptive study has served to obtain information and delve deeper into diverse aspects and functions of human resources in Mexican public libraries. Further studies using correlational and explicative approaches shall support development of projects to improve the conditions of personnel and help fill in the theoretical and practical lacuna in this field.

This paper reports preliminary results of interviews and information gathered from several libraries of the National Library Network. These data shall serve to establish a human resources development model that can be replicated across the country in the future.

The beneficiaries of this study are largely those persons working in Mexican public libraries and the directors or decision makers leading these libraries,

who choose to implement this approach for detecting problems and finding solutions in this area. Through this lens, we can see the important social impact of human resources and the way in public library human resources can favor the dissemination and consumption of culture.

Definitions and general aspects of public libraries and human recourses

The public library

According to the IFLA/UNESCO Manifesto on libraries published in 1994, the public library is:

> a local center of information that facilitates the users of all classes of information. The public library services are provided on the basis of equal access for all people, without regard to age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social condition. They must offer services and special materials for those users who for one reason or another cannot make use of the ordinary services and materials, for example, linguistic minorities, disabled persons, person in hospitals or those confined to prisons. All age groups should be able to find the materials to meet their needs. The collections and services should include all kinds of technologically based and traditional supports. High quality and local appropriateness are fundamental. The materials should reflect current trends and the evolution of society, as well as the memory of the efforts and imagination of humanity. Collections and services should never be subject to ideological, political or religious censure, and much less the pressure of commercial interests.[5]

Despite being twenty years old and in light of the fact that equality in public library is a fundamental value underpinning the identical treatment given to all persons and the value of inclusion, this definition is still valid in that it is based upon the desire to bring opportunities to all and ensure a fair distribution of resources in order that they may enjoy quality of life and well-being. Moreover, it also highlights the characteristics of collections of bibliographic materials in the public library that must be developed on the basis of the diversity of interests and needs of the community to which it belongs.

---

5   Federación Internacional de Asociaciones de Bibliotecarios y Bibliotecas, Manifiesto de la IFLA/Unesco sobre la biblioteca pública, 1994.

The IFLA/UNESCO Directives on the development of public library services states:

> [the public library] is an established organization, supported and financed by the community, either through the auspices of an authority or local, regional or national agency, or by means of any other collective organization. It provides access to knowledge, information and intellectual works through a series of resources and services that are available to all members of the community without regard to race, nationality, age, sex, religion, language, disability, class, profession or educational attainment.[6]

This definition affords an additional element: the economic support, which in most cases is provided by the taxpayer, a fact that makes the entity an institution for all.

Moreover, by including the presence of a great diversity of users, the public library become an indispensable asset, a fact that IFLA/UNESCO highlights in the last lines of its definition establishing equal status to all users. In our country, the General Libraries Act under Article Two defines the public library as:

> All those establishments that hold printed or digital collections of a general nature of more than 500 titles that are catalogued and classified, and which are available for loan free of charge to any person requesting them under the terms of service and applicable administrative rules. The public library shall have the purpose of offering democratic access to all in order to consult books and other print and digital materials, as well as to other complementary cultural services, orientation and information that allows the user to acquire, share, grow and preserve knowledge in all fields without constraints.

Even though this definition dates from 1988 and is somewhat limited, highlights the concepts of free lending services, democracy and access for all persons and forms of expression, as well as the freedom to use materials independently to promote intellectual and collaborative work.

Article Two of the Libraries Act of the Federal District offers the following definitions:

> V.   Library. The physical space with an organizational structure, bibliographical collection, and newspaper clipping and document archive in any format, as

---

6   P. Gill, Directrices IFLA/Unesco para el desarrollo del servicio de bibliotecas públicas, 26.

well as information and communication technologies, and whose mission is to contribute to the development of persons and their quality of life on the basis of equal opportunity to any visitor by means of dissemination of ideas and access to reading materials, information, research and cultural expressions.

VI.   Public Library. Any library that provides service to the general public and is a dependency of the public administration of the Federal District.

In reality, the first definition comes closer to the mission and objectives of the public library, while that concerning the public library specifically is rather narrow in scope and leaves out many features of libraries of this kind, such as free service, inclusion and the broad base of knowledge covered by the collection, among other things.

Other features and tasks of the public library include:

- Storage, organization, and supply of information contained in any kind of documentary support issued by authorized, reliable sources.
- Making local and global information available that is useful to the community it serves. This suggests that it must face constant challenges in terms of access, coverage, breadth and depth.
- Providing cultural and artistic services that allow the population to acquire, grow and share knowledge for their personal development.
- The educational function positioning the library as a high caliber institution, in that through its services it helps form a better informed, more participative, fair and free society.

Taking into account these diverse definitions, one can conclude that the public library is a social space that contains collections of print and digitized materials on topics of general interest, whose basic function is to serve the locality through diverse informational and cultural services, which are provided under certain guidelines and always free of charge. Through diverse strategies and activities of the library personnel, these services are made available to users. These library employees must be properly trained and motivated, while enjoying workplace conditions that are adequate for the performance of such activities.

Human resources

Human resources are defined as the subset of persons that work in a public or private organization, performing diverse tasks and assignments in accord

with their abilities, talents and the daily operational needs. Dessler and Varela point out that

> the managzement of human resources entails the practices and policies needed to improve human relationships in administrative work, specifically recruiting, training, evaluating and remunerating, while offering a safe equitable workplace for the employees.[7]

Chiavenato asserts that

> Human resources are distributed in the institutional level of the organization (directorate), the middle levels (middle management) and the operational level (technicians, auxiliaries and operators). The human resource, he adds, is the only living, dynamic resource of the organization, and it manages the use of other, non-human, physical and material resources. Moreover, it constitutes a type of resource that possesses a vocation oriented toward growth and development.[8]

Both concepts invite reflection regarding the importance of people as a key element in organizations in a changing, globalized world. Similarly, the management or operation of people requires efficient organization and diverse functions or practices that are completely necessary for achieving ends. In this context, the IFLA/UNESCO 1994 Manifesto of on the public library states:

> The public library must be organized effectively and uphold professional standards of operation. The librarian is an active intermediary between users and resources. Librarians must have ongoing professional training in order to offer adequate services.[9]

Likewise, the IFLA/UNESCO Directives for the development of public library services recognizes the following:

> Personnel is a vital resource in the operation of a library […] In order to provide optimal services to the community, utilize resources effectively and meet demand, trained and motivated personnel must be retained. […] All personnel shall have exhaustive knowledge of the library service policies, and of the well-defined tasks

---

7   Gary Dessler and Ricardo A. Varela Juárez, Administración de recursos humanos: enfoque latinoamericano, 2.
8   Idalberto Chiavenato, Administración de recursos humanos, 128.
9   Federación Internacional de Asociaciones de Bibliotecarios y Bibliotecas, Manifiesto...

and duties, employment conditions and receive duly tabulated, competitive salaries.

The library personnel must have a series of aptitudes and qualities, such as sociability, social conscience, ability to work in teams and mastery of the practices and procedures of the institution.[10]

Both the Manifesto and the Directives acknowledge the importance of persons to achieve optimal management of the public library, in that "they are the suppliers of knowledge, abilities, competencies; and, above all, they provide their intelligence, which is their most important contribution to organizations [...] persons constitute the intellectual capital of the organization."[11] The human resource is the one asset that surpasses all others is importance.

Persons are definitely the most important asset of the public library. As such, personnel should enjoy ongoing training under a vision that anticipates the needs of services; and they must be sufficiently qualified to provide adequate development and efficient management of human resources.

Method

This study uses an exploratory-descriptive method, whose aim is to make and initial approach to the current situation of human resources in the public libraries that belong to the National Network of Mexican Public Libraries.

The methodology employed uses both of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative technique consists of the application of an online survey to a sample of libraries, which were sent the questionnaire. On the other hand, the qualitative technique entails direct observation, participative observation and interviews held in the workplace.

Object of study

The object under study herein is the human resources population working in 7,388 public libraries of the National Library Network of Mexico. This population is diverse and, because of the lack of any official, updated registry of

10   Gill, Directrices…, 125.
11   Idalberto Chiavenato, Gestión del talento humano, 10.

the personnel working in these libraries, the research object includes diverse types of human resources, whether they are salaried employees belonging to the union, contract administrators, volunteers and graduates fulfilling their social service and internships requirements.

Sample

In view of the diversity and size of the population, it is important to have a representative sample. The sampling method, the sample size and type were determined as follows:

Sampling method

In order to achieve the stated objectives and ensure representativeness of the sample, the elements of the population that were to make up the sample were selected using probability sampling with replacement formula, in which each libraries of the National Library Network would have the same likelihood of inclusion in the sample.

Type of sample

To perform the probabilistic extraction, the type of sampling to be used was random. This provided the possibility of receiving answers from any library in the Mexican Republic, resulting in a heterogeneous sample that include delegational libraries, central state public libraries, regional libraries and municipal libraries.

Sample size

The sample size was determined using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{N\,p\,q\,Z^2}{E^2\,(N\text{-}1) + p\,q\,Z^2}$$

Where:

N (Size of finite population) = 7,388 public libraries
Z (Confidence level) = 90 %
E (Margin of error) = 5 %

p (Variability) = 40 %
q (Variability complement) = 60%

This operation provided a sample of 249 public libraries.

Data collection instrument

The quantitative technique employed in this research consisted of a survey to collect data. This instrument can be viewed at: http://es.surveymonkey.com/s/CJ5F5KC

This survey instrument addresses the situation of human resources on the basis of the following research variables:

1. Demographic features
2. Educational achievement
3. Labor situation
4. Job skills
5. Duties

The instrument is structured in ten query sets (See Appendix): The first set(1) consists of four open-ended fields focusing on knowledge of the public library where the respondent currently works, their job or position, and the location of their library (municipality, delegation and state).

The second two iems (2 and 3) deal with the first research variable, i.e. demographic data of the personnel (age and sex, respectively).

The second variable dealing with educational achievement of the personnel is structured in query set number 4, composed of eight options ranging from no formal studies to doctorate degree. The third variable, concerning the labor situation, is divided into four subsections: work schedule, salary earned by librarians, years on the job and training received. These variables are addressed in queries 5, 6, 7 and 8.

The fourth variable, job skills, is addressed in item 9, which provides a list of six basic skills that a librarian must have to perform the job. Each option requires the respondent to rate the degree to which they possess the skill on a scale of good, average or poor. Item 10 serves to assess the fifth research variable of job duties. For this purpose, we studied the duties that the personnel

of all public libraries should perform and compiled a list of administrative, technical and auxiliary tasks. For each of these task the respondent is asked to select those that they are required to perform most frequently.

Application of the instrument

Because the vast expanse of the country's territory, the research opted to apply the survey by electronic media. In this way, the data gathering instrument was designed with Survey Monkey software. The application strategy entailed sending the data gathering instrument to 31 state central libraries. To do this, we consulted the Directory of State Central Libraries of the National Network of Libraries at: http://www.rednacionaldebibliotecas.gob.mx/mapa_biblioteca_estalRed.php

On the basis of the information provided in said directory, an email was sent to each of the state central libraries, explaining the objective of the study and requesting their cooperation to respond to the survey and send it to the municipal and regional libraries of their respective states. The link to the online survey was available after July 7, 2013, and responses began to flow in on July 22. The data gathering was finalized on October 14, 2013.

Study limits

The development of the research was affected by three main factors:

a) Geographic limitations: The extension of the territory of the Mexican Republic makes it difficult to perform a field study in order to learn about the human resources situation in each of the public libraries in the country. Time was also a constraint. As such, we opted for the use of email and an online survey technique, which we understand may tend to skew the data gathered.

b) Deficiencies in communication and participation: One of the major problems faced by the research project was the lack of cooperation of state central libraries. This is evident from the scant number of email questionnaires they returned. While some states were more cooperative than others, some states did not respond at all. This uneven pattern of response exerted effects on the results, since there was a greater number of responses from some states and very few or none at all from others.

c) Risk to personal safety: In addition to these limitations, another factor that limited the qualitative aspect of the research of gathering data on site was the situation of criminality and violence prevailing in several regions of the country. Moreover, some regions of the country included in the sample are remote and difficult to reach.

Because of these limitations, this research regarding the human resources situation of personnel working in the country's public libraries shall for the moment be deemed preliminary in scope and of an exploratory-descriptive nature. The results obtained will provided orientation for future research in this field.

Library corpus under study

Of the questionnaires sent out to the 31 state entities, responses were received only from Campeche, Durango and Jalisco.

To complement the results obtained using the email survey instrument, we visited several nearby public libraries that were deemed representative of the research universe. Because of their social impact, ergonomic standards and good practices, site visits to gather data were made to the Biblioteca Pública Francisco Zarco (Delegation Benito Juarez, Mexico City), the Biblioteca Juventino Rosas (Delegation Magdalena Contreras, Mexico City) and the Biblioteca Beatriz Hampson Esquivel (Municipality of Ixtapaluca, State of Mexico).

The aforementioned data gathering instrument was applied to personnel working in libraries in the Federal District and the State of Mexico. All told, the survey was applied to 35 employees working in 10 public libraries in different states.

The following table is a list of the participating libraries:

Table 1. Corpus libraries under study

State	Municipality/Delegation	Public Library	Type
Campeche	San Francisco de Campeche	FranciscoSosaEscalante	Central State
Distrito Federal	Benito Juárez	Francisco Zarco	Central Delegational
Distrito Federal	Magdalena Contreras	Juventino Rosas	Central Delegational
Durango	Vicente Guerrero	Octavio Paz	Municipal

Durango	Vicente Guerrero	Tohue	Municipal
Durango	Vicente Guerrero	José Guadalupe Rodríguez	Municipal
Durango	Vicente Guerrero	José Ángel Ceniceros	Municipal
Durango	Nombre de Dios	AlbertoTerronesBenítez	Regional
Estado de México	Ixtapaluca	Beatriz Hampson Esquivel	Municipal
Jalisco	Guadalajara	Profr.RamónGarcíaRuiz	Central State

Results

First variable. Demographics

A quarter of the workers surveyed are between 30 and 39 years of age, while a little more than a third are between 40 and 49 years-old. These two groups make up 71.43 % of the sample as can be seen in Figure 1. With regard to the data gathered, we can assert that senior citizens are a minority, while persons between 21 and 29 comprise about 17%. Thanks to the site visits to delegational libraries in Mexico City and the qualitative techniques employed, we can see that the work young people perform in public libraries is largely associated with social service obligations. These young people work largely in the Digital Services Modules, suggesting a strong correlation between their course of studies and the duties they perform.
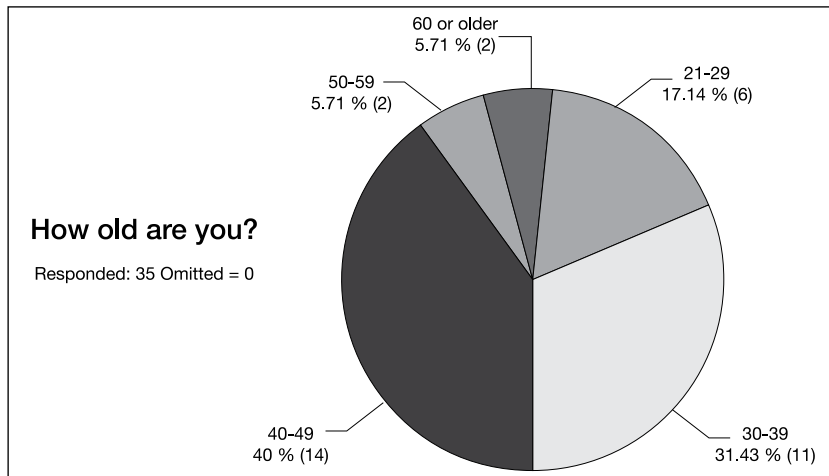

Figure 1. Age breakdown

Likewise, almost 90% of the human resources working in public libraries of the country are female (Figure 2). In the public libraries of the State of Mexico and the Federal District we see greater diversity, with the proportion of women to men about equal. Responses from the states of Jalisco, Campeche and Durango, however, have come exclusively from women.
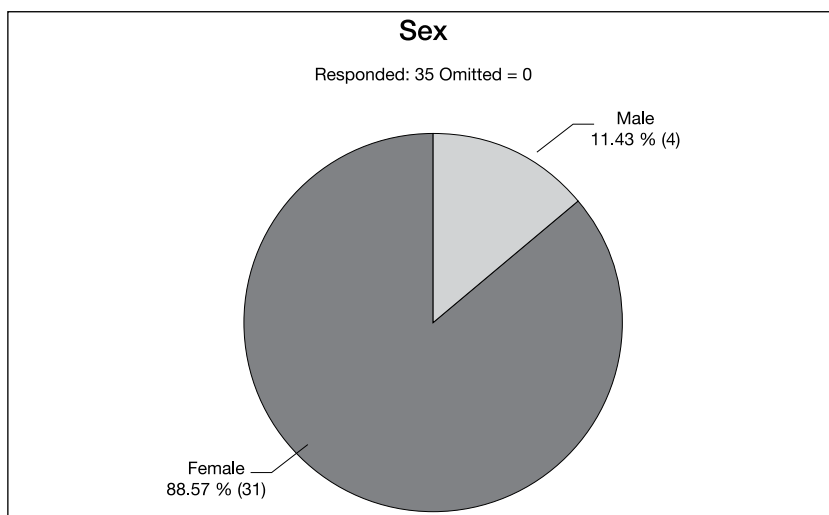

Figure 2. Sex of respondents

Second variable. Educational achievement

Formal training is a crucial part of matching people to jobs and ensuring productivity. It is also an ideal organizational strategy for developing competencies, promoting creativity and increasing their capacity to innovate.[12]

In this light, it is very important that library personnel have both general and specialized training in order to uphold and deliver library processes, not only in terms of development of the collections or new technology, but also with regard to services. As for the library sample under study, most public librarians have educational achievement that falls between secondary and high school, at 31% and 34 %, respectively. (Figure 3).
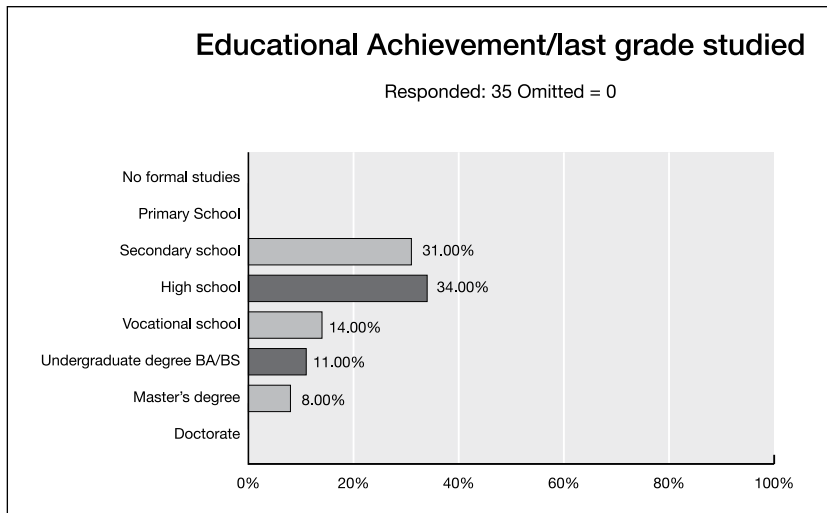
12 Hernández Pacheco, Gestión y desarrollo…, 187.

Educational Achievement/last grade studied

Responded: 35 Omitted = 0

Category	Value
No formal studies	
Primary School	
Secondary school	31.00%
High school	34.00%
Vocational school	14.00%
Undergraduate degree BA/BS	11.00%
Master's degree	8.00%
Doctorate	

Figure 3. Educational achievement

The IFLA/UNESCO Directives for the development of public libraries state that: "librarians shall hold undergraduate or post-graduate degrees in library and information sciences from a library science school."[13] As can be seen, librarians in the sample holding a bachelor's degree comprise only 11%, and those holding a master's degree comprise 8%.

Moreover, most of the employees do not have formal training in library and/or information sciences. Many of these respondents reported holding degrees in Pedagogy, Economy, Nutrition, Law, Business Administration, Accounting and others.

Third variable. Job situation

Or the purposes of this study, the following labor situations of librarians are contemplated:

1. Years on the job
2. Schedule
3. Job training
4. Salary

13   Gill, Directrices…, 58.

Years on the job

The variable of years or time on the job in the public library involves the experience of the employee, and the assumption that more time on the job correlates with higher expertise and better performance.

As can be observed in Figure 4, 48.57% of the personnel have five years or less on the job, meaning that nearly half of all library employees of public libraries are relatively new in their positions. This may come about because they have been transferred to the area recently or as a result of a change in the local (municipal, state or delegational) government administration.

How long have you been working in the library?

Responded: 35 Omitted 0

20 to 30 years
14.29 % (5)

10 to 20 years
22.86 % (8)

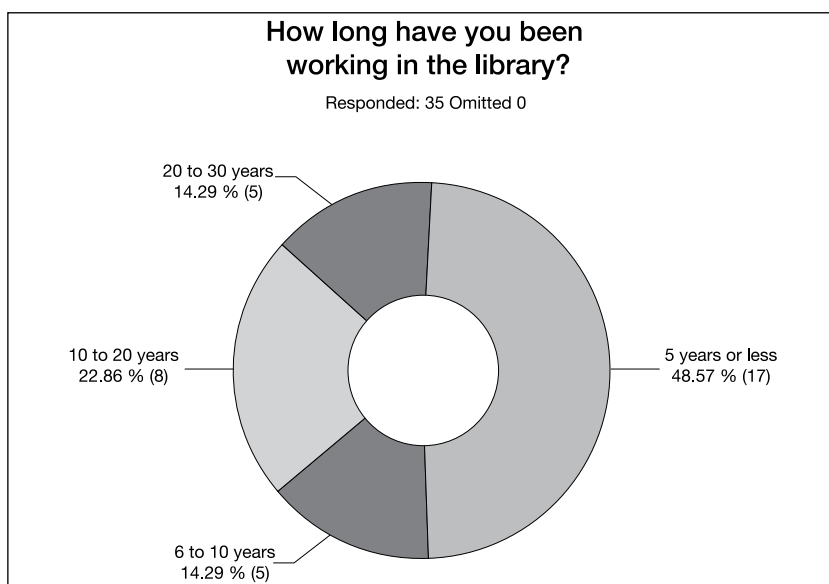5 years or less
48.57 % (17)

6 to 10 years
14.29 % (5)

Figure 4. Years on the job

Moreover, 22.86% report having from 10 to 20 years on the job, while 14.29% report between 6 and ten years of experience. Those reporting from 6 to 10 and 10 to 20 years on the job were in all cases the head librarians and coordinators of the libraries in the sample. It would seem that longer experience correlates with higher positions.

Work schedule

The UNESCO Manifesto on public libraries states that the proper operation of a library entails offering a broad array of services within a suitable space and a sufficient and appropriate schedule.[14]

The data gathered in this study shows that almost all of the personnel (97%) work from Monday to Friday, while only 3% work on the weekend. (See Figure 5). This breakdown stands in opposition to IFLA/UNESCO Directives for the the development of public libraries, which state: "in order to provide optimal access to services, the library must offer the most practical schedule for those who live, work and study in the community."[15]
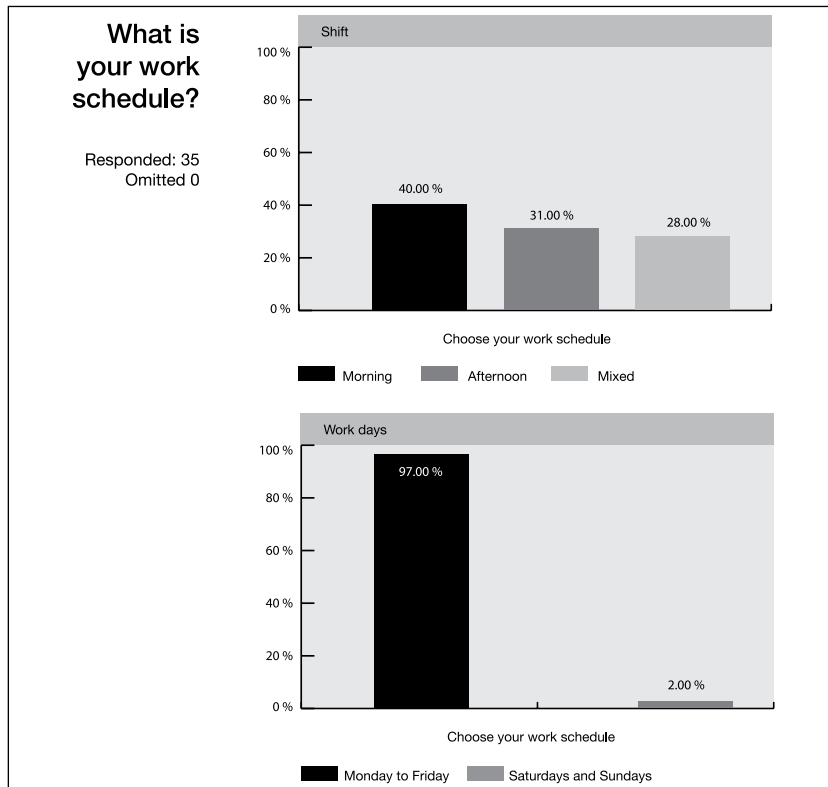

Figure 5. Work schedule

14 Federación Internacional de Asociaciones de Bibliotecarios y Bibliotecas, Manifiesto…, 3.
15 Gill, Directrices…, 40.

We can see that most libraries are open only during typical work or school hours from Monday to Friday, which excludes are large part of the population who cannot use or enjoy the library services. This is a concern because the public library is not only and information center and complement to school; it is also a recreational center and a place to spend free time. As such, weekend hours should always be made available in public libraries.[16]

In terms of work shift, 40% of the personnel surveyed report working the morning shift, while 31% report working the afternoon shift. Central delegational library coordinators in the Federal District report a lack of personnel to cover these shifts. As such, fully 28% of the personnel surveyed report covering both morning and afternoon shifts.

Job training

According to IFLA/UNESCO Directives for the development of public libraries, training is a key part of library activities:

> There must be a planned, ongoing training program in place for all library personnel at all levels, whether they work full or part time. The fast pace of progress in information technology makes the need for periodic training even more urgent. The training programs must emphasize networking and access to alternative sources of information.[17]

Since the librarian serves as an intermediary between the information resources and the user, it is important they receive ongoing training in order to provide proper services.[18] According to the data gathered, however, the situation of training in Mexican public libraries is deficient, with 51% of the personnel reporting having received training on rare occasions (see Figure 6).

---

16 This proposal entails a series of efforts: expand weekend staff by increasing the budgets allocated to public libraries. This change, however, implies an urgent reformulation of public library policy in our country.

17 Gill, Directrices…, 59.

18 Federación Internacional de Asociaciones de Bibliotecarios y Bibliotecas, Manifiesto…, 3.

How often to do attend training courses?

Responded: 35 Omitted 0

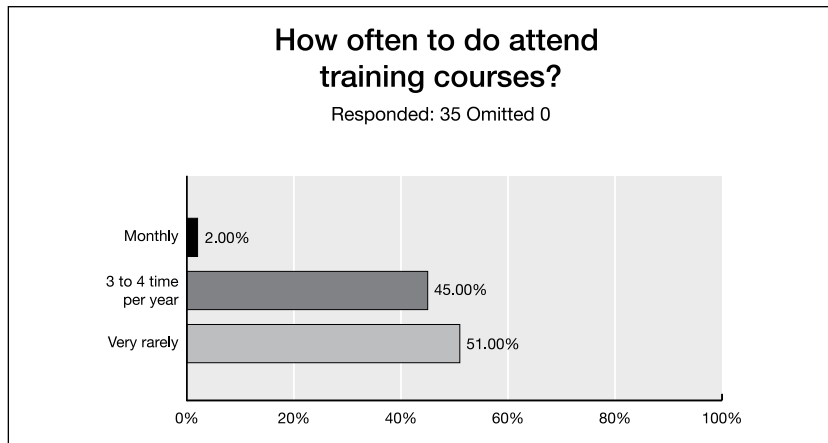| Category	Value
Monthly	2.00%
3 to 4 time per year	45.00%
Very rarely	51.00%

Figure 6. Training received

Nonetheless, nearly half (45%) of those surveyed report receiving training three or four times per year, though these training sessions generally last from three to five days, suggesting the training is somewhat superficial. Moreover, the topics covered are largely library services, reading promotion and operations such as lending. Meanwhile, courses in information technology management, specifically the operation of the Digital Services Modules, are being offered in libraries across the country. The value of training and education is indispensable, because an employee receiving ongoing training will offer broader and higher quality services to the user public.

In our country, only 2% of library employees receive monthly training. Because of the lack of ongoing training, job performance, services and library processes tend to suffer. This in turn leads to dissatisfaction among users who are unable to find the information they need. When this happens they may well resort to other sources of information.

Salary

Salaries earned by the employees of public libraries should be viewed in relation to the other variables addressed. For example, a salary should match the educational achievement of the individual, as well as his or her competencies and abilities. Salary is the determining factor in job performance, because a fair, equitable salary allows the employee to meet their personal needs without taking on other work to make ends meet. Moreover, properly adjusted salaries ensure that employees give their best on the job.

Workplace conditions are indispensable to job performance of librarians. As such, all public library personnel must work in conditions that are safe, clean and with sufficient space, in addition to earning proper salaries. In this regard Phillip Gill has asserted: "Salaries should be matched to the job performed and should be competitive with those paid for similar jobs in the community."[19]

These matters notwithstanding, Figure 7 shows that salaries of more than half of the personnel surveyed oscillate between 2,000 and 3,000 pesos per month, while fully a third of those surveyed report salaries above this range.

What is your approximate salary range?

Responded: 35 Omitted 0

$8 000 or higher
3.03 % (1)

$0 to 1 000
3.03 % (1)

$6 000 to 7 000
12.12 % (4)

$4 000 to 5 000
18.18 % (6)
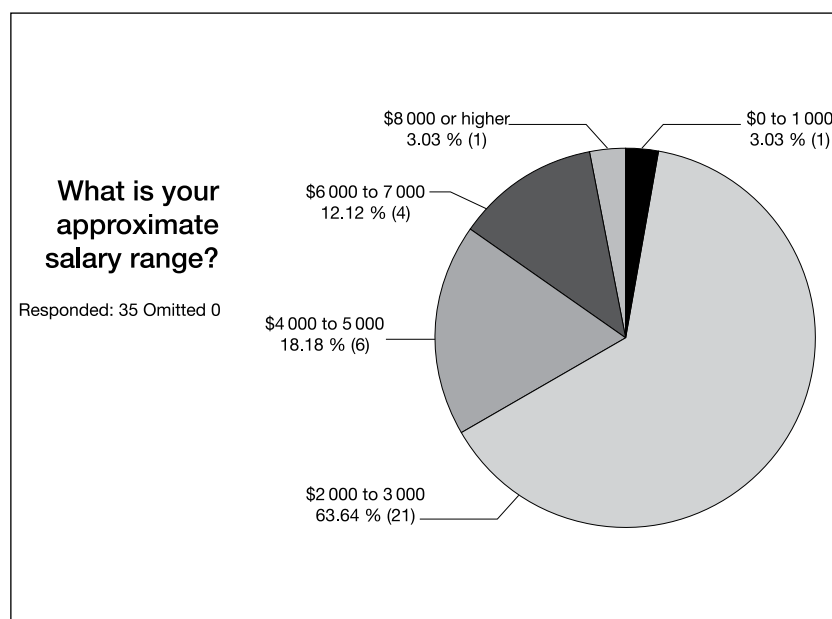
$2 000 to 3 000
63.64 % (21)

Figure 7. Salary

Furthermore, the study provided a coincident results for job position and the salaries paid. Those working as auxiliaries (the majority) earn salaries in the range of 2000-3000. These employees work in lending and serving the public in the Digital Services Modules. Some of these library auxiliaries hold bachelor's degrees, while others have only finished secondary school. Despite this, they earn practically the same salary. The General Libraries Act of Mexico (1988) does not address pay scales or matters of remuneration as

19   Gill, Directrices…, 59.

it pertains to the qualifications of personnel. Moreover, salary policy and a pay scale derived from a study of librarian salaries and duties have yet to be developed. Because of this lack of orientation in the area of salaries, many librarians receive inequitable salaries. Salary differentials from region to region is also observed and is exacerbated when there is a change in the local administration which often affects budgets allocated to the library.

Currently, we recommend a remuneration system based on competencies, which entails considering the knowledge, skills, abilities and aptitudes of the personnel and how these relate to the proper operation of the organization. These qualification are the essential components in the operation of the library that must be duly remunerated.[20]

In this sense, the results obtained show the case of a librarian in Durango in the position of auxiliary who holds a bachelor's degree and works both morning and afternoon shifts from Monday to Friday, while earning about 3,000 pesos monthly. In contrast, a librarian heading a municipal public library, who holds a bachelor's degree, diplomas and librarian certification, earns about 7,000 pesos per month for working weekends. In another case, a librarian reporting 20 to 30 years on the job who has technical training works earns less than 2000 pesos per month working in the Digital Services Module.

As can be observed, in terms of salary, a proper appraisal of job positions needs to be performed. This would entail comparative studies and a library policy that stands in line with the demands of the country, the competencies of librarians and the duties they fulfill in public libraries. No doubt, the results provided herein will serve to encourage further research in these matters.

Further research will provide more information on this variable and the degree to which pay is correlated to educational achievement and job duties in public libraries.

Fourth variable. Job skills

As social institutions, public libraries provide services to a community of users that have diverse needs and characteristics. The library personnel must

---

20   Hernández Pacheco, Gestión y desarrollo…, 170.

have a set of aptitudes and qualities to meet the demands of an ever changing community. The IFLA/UNESCO Directives for the development of public libraries include a list of the main qualities and aptitudes required of the personnel working in the public library. These include:[21]

- The ability to communicate positively with people
- The ability to understand the needs of the users
- The ability to cooperate with persons and groups in the community
- Knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity
- Knowledge of the material comprising the library collection and how to gain access to it
- Knowledge of the principles of public service and an ability to adhere to them
- The ability work with others to provide effective library services
- Flexible organizational aptitudes allowing for implementation of changes
- Imagination, vision and openness to new ideas and practices
- The ability to modify work methods in order to respond to new situations
- Knowledge of information and communications technology

On the basis of this list, the following abilities are established:

1. Cooperation and work with the rest of the personnel
2. Positive communication with others
3. Effective attention to the needs of users
4. Knowledge of the library collection
5. Bringing new ideas for the library
6. Use of information technologies

Figure 8 shows that personnel see their abilities positively in all but the last two skill factors.
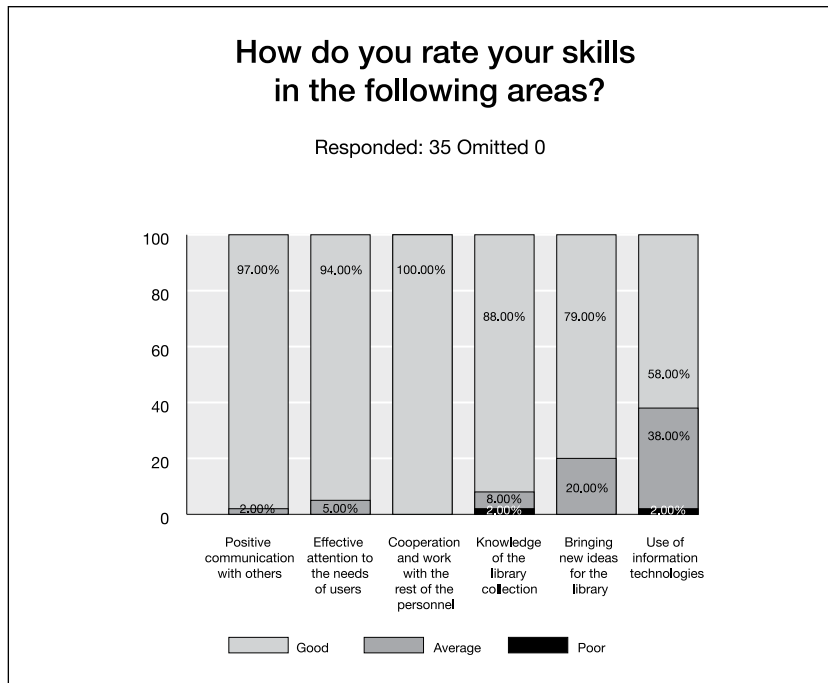
21   Ibid., 55.

Figure 8. Job skills

Those skills for which 90% respondents gave themselves good ratings are as follows:

- Cooperation and work with the rest of the personnel (good = 100 %).
- Positive communication with others (good = 97 %).
- Effective Attention to the needs of users (good = 94 %).
- Knowledge of the library collection (good = 88 %).

For the skill factor of Bringing new ideas for the library, 20% reported middling ability, while for use of information technology, fully 40% reported having poor skills.

The skill factor is linked to the skill variables of years on the job, educational achievement and age.

The results show that many librarians who consider themselves good across the five skill factors are those with 10 to 20 years on the job. These employees, moreover, report not receiving ongoing training. As such, we can deduce

that they have learned on the job. Additionally, personnel with less than five years on the job, report having less knowledge of the collection and low skills with regard to bringing new ideas to the institution.

With regard to age, results show that librarians over the age of 40 have lower self-ratings for use of information technologies. Furthermore, they report receiving very few training courses, something that ensures the persistence of the technology gap.

We also find that employees between the ages of 20 to 29 are most often assigned to man the Digital Services Modules. This segment also reports the highest self-ratings in the use of information technologies, while also reporting low knowledge of the library collection. The results regarding the skills of the personnel can help fine tune training programs. By knowing just where improvement is needed, formal, skills-focused training programs can be developed and deployed.

Fifth variable. Duties

To study this factor on the basis of the IFLA/UNESCO Directives for the development of public libraries,[22] we have used a series of duties considered basic to the operations of public libraries (Table 2). In accord with this list, we have established four groupings of basic activities:

Table 2. Basic duties performed by library personnel

From the list of options, check those you perform most often		
Response options	Response	
Shelving books	85.71%	30
Book loan check out	77.14%	27
Helping users find information they need	88.57%	31
Staff the library computer room	57.14%	20
Cleaning of library installations	74.29%	26
Watch over the security of the installations and the user community	77.14%	27
Watch over and control entry of users to the library	82.86%	29
Manage acquisitions of resources and materials for the library	74.29%	26
Analyze the information needs of the community	62.86%	22
Formulate and implement policies to broaden services	65.71%	23
Plan services for the public	71.43%	25

▶

22   Gill, Directrices…, 56.

Administer the library budget	25.71%	9
Administer personnel relations	42.86%	15
Manage relationships with other libraries	45.71%	16
Catalogue and classify library materials	77.14%	27
Label books and other documents	82.86%	29
Book binding	34.29%	12
Make posters and other promotional materials for the library	65.71%	23
Participate in library extension activities (theater works, music, workshops, films, storytelling, etc.)	68.57%	24
Total respondents: 35		

With regard to the duties performed by public library personnel, we found that for the total of 19 proposed in the item, more than 80% of those surveyed reported working in the following activities:

Group A
- Shelving books (= 85.71 %).
- Helping users find information they need (= 88.57 %).
- Watch over and control entry of users to the library (= 82.86 %).
- Label books and other documents (= 82.86 %).

Between 70 % and 79% report six activities:

Group B
- Book loan check out (= 77.14 %).
- Catalogue and classify library materials (77.14 %).
- Cleaning of library installations (=74.29%).
- Watch over the security of the installations and the user community (= 77.14%).
- Manage acquisitions of resources and materials for the library (= 74.29 %)
- Plan services for the public (= 71.43%).

Between 50% and 69% report five other activities:

Group C
- Participate in library extension activities 68.57 %).
- Make posters and other promotional materials for the library (= 65.71 %).
- Formulate and implement policies to broaden services (= 65.71 %).
- Analyze the information needs of the community (= 62.86%).
- Staff the library computer room (= 57.14%).

The following four activities were reported by less than 50% of the respondents:

Group D
- Manage relationships with other libraries (= 45.71 %).
- Administer personnel relations (= 42.86 %).
- Book binding (= 34.29 %).
- Administer the library budget (= 25.71%).

The majority of respondents perform the activities of group A. These activities are considered basic to the public library. In contrast, the Group B activities are associated with certain processes and services. Thus, for example, some libraries catalogue and classify their materials. The Group C activities are performed in many public libraries and are of increasing importance. The Group D activities are executive in nature or entail specialization, such as book binding. Some of the activities included in Group B may also be considered executive in nature, such as those duties associated with acquisitions and planning services.

Conclusions

This study provides a glimpse of the human resources situation in public libraries in Mexico. It has detected a labor profile that invites further, broad and in-depth research. The study also reveals the following employee profile in our library system:

An adult librarian with mid-level educational achievement, relatively few years on the job, working a mixed schedule (though slightly more often in the morning shift), who has not received training for the job and earns less than two minimum wages, and who brings four basic library skills to the table, while lacking in information technology skills. This employee performs the duties listed in Group A.

This report is exploratory in nature and not conclusive. As mentioned throughout this paper, the following matters require further examination:

- What ongoing training or education exists, in light of the fact that half of all respondents report having received no training whatsoever?
- What is the salary situation of personnel receiving the lowest salaries? What benefits do they enjoy, and can they live on their salaries?

- Is there is a correlation between salary and educational achievement of library personnel?
- How can the personnel reporting the lowest job skills be helped to raise them? Proposals and new ideas for managing information technologies in libraries.
- How do employees perform their duties in libraries? Specifically, we need to know the competencies they bring to the table.
- How can human resources improvement proposals be implemented in public libraries?

In view of these preliminary results, we believe action is needed to improve the situation. To this end we suggest the following actions:

- Establishment of a data base of the personnel working in Mexican public libraries, containing the factors indicated herein and other factors associated with management and development of human resources.
- Establishment of formulas for selecting and evaluating personnel, and the creation of job profiles that link to the other factors.
- Establishment of a methodology for analyzing and describing job profiles in public libraries for the purpose of ensuring the quality of performance and planning ongoing improvement of services.
- Establishment of a pay scale for the personnel working in public libraries in accord with the minimum wage for each economic zone and other factors such as educational achievement and competencies.
- Development of innovative teaching-learning tools to aid ongoing training and development of competencies of the employees in public libraries
- Development and implementation of survey on labor climate
- Incorporation of strategic planning elements to develop human resources

The efforts to implement these improvements should not ignore that fact

that libraries, as agents of change, have the duty to evaluate their own performance and impact on society. To this end, they must adapt and integrate personnel management and development paradigms proven to be effective in other organizations and institutions around the world.[23]

---

23 Hernández Pacheco, Gestión y desarrollo…, 294.

Works cited

Chiavenato, Idalberto. Administración de recursos humanos. 5th. ed. Colombia: McGraw-Hill, 2000.

—— Gestión del talento humano. 3rd. ed. México: McGraw Hill, 2009.

Dessler, Gary, and Ricardo A. Varela Juárez. Administración de recursos humanos: enfoque latinoamericano. 2nd. ed. México: Pearson Educación, 2004.

Directrices IFLA/Unesco para el desarrollo del servicio de bibliotecas públicas. IFLA/Unesco, 2001, accessed March 26, 2014, http://unesdoc. unesco. org/images/0012/001246/124654s.pdf

Federación Internacional de Asociaciones de Bibliotecarios y Bibliotecas. Manifiesto de la IFLA/Unesco sobre la biblioteca pública, 1994. Translated by Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez, 2004, accessed October 20, 2013, http://www.IFLA.org/ES/node/7271

Gill, P. Directrices IFLA/Unesco para el desarrollo del servicio de bibliotecas públicas. 2nd. ed. México: Consejo Nacional para Cultura y las Artes, Dirección General de Bibliotecas; La Haya: IFLA/ Unesco, 2007.

González Amador, Roberto. "En México 4 de cada diez personas no tienen para comprar alimentos," La Jornada, March 19, 2014, accessed March 26, 2014, http://www.jornada.UNAM.mx/2014/03/19/economia/026n2eco

Hernández Pacheco, F. El bibliotecólogo emprendedor: un reto del siglo XXI. México: Colegio Nacional de Bibliotecarios, Universidad Latinoamericana, 2000.

—— Gestión y desarrollo de recursos humanos en bibliotecas. México: Secretaría de Educación Pública, ENBA, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Library Outsourcing, 2012.

Hernández Silva, F. E. and Y. Martí Lahera. "Conocimiento organizacional: la gestión de los recursos y el capital humano," Acimed 14 (1), 2006, accessed October 20, 2013, http://bvs.sld.cu/revistas/aci/vol14_1_06 /aci03106.htm

Los RecursosHumanos.com. ¿A qué se denomina recursos humanos? 2008, accessed October 20, 2013, http://www.losrecursoshumanos.com/contenidos/5403-a-que-se-denomina-recursos-humanos.html

Matus Sepúlveda, G. "Perspectivas en la formación de recursos humanos en bibliotecología," Biblios 14, 2002, accessed October 20, 2013, http://eprints.rclis.org/5472/1/B14-04.pdf

México, Ley General de Bibliotecas, 2009, accessed October 20, 2013. http://www. diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/134.pdf

México, Ley de Bibliotecas del Distrito Federal, 2009, accessed October 20, 2013. http://www.consejeria.df.gob.mx/images/leyes/leyes/LEY DEBIBLIOTECASDELDISTRITOFEDERAL.pdf

Appendix

Survey applied to personnel of the National Public Library Network

Survey of human resources in the Network of Mexican Public Libraries

1. State the name of the library where you work and other relevant infromation.

   Nameoflibrary:_____
   Joborposition:_____
   MunicipalityorDelegation:_____
   StateorRegion:_____

2. Your age falls into the following range:

   ¨ 17 years-old or less
   ¨ 18-20
   ¨ 21-29
   ¨ 30-39
   ¨ 40-49
   ¨ 50-59
   ¨ 60 o más

3. Sex

   ¨ Male
   ¨ Female

4. Educational achievement / last grade of studies completed:

   ¨ No formal studies   ¨ High School   ¨ Master's Degree
   ¨ Elementary School   ¨ Vocational School ¨ Doctorate
   ¨ Secondary   ¨ Bachelor's Degree

   Forvocationalschool,bachelor'sdegreeorpost-graduatedegree,specifythemajorareaofstudy:
   _____
   _____

5. State your work schedule.

   Select the schedule, shift   Shift   Workdays
   and days you work in the library   [____ ▼]   [_____ ▼]

6. Approximately, what is your current monthly salary?
   _____
   _____

7. How long have you been working in the library?
   ¨ 5 years or less
   ¨ 6 to 10 years

   ¨ 10 to 20 years
   ¨ 20 to 30 years
   ¨ More than 30 years

8. How often do you attend training courses?

   ¨ Monthly   ¨ 3 or 4 times per years   ¨ Very rarely

9. To the best of your ability, rate your degree of skill for each of the following skill descriptors:

	Good	Average	Poor
· Positive communication with others	¨	¨	¨
· Effectively attending to the needs of users	¨	¨	¨
· Cooperation and work with the rest of the personnel	¨	¨	¨ ¨
· Knowledge of the library collection	¨	¨	¨
· Bringing new ideas for the library	¨	¨	¨
· Use of information technologies	¨	¨	¨

10. From the following list of duties, mark those that you perform most frequently

   ¨ Shelving books
   ¨ Book loan check out
   ¨ Helping users find information they need
   ¨ Staff the library computer room
   ¨ Cleaning of library installations
   ¨ Watch over the security of the installations and the user community
   ¨ Watch over and control entry of users to the library
   ¨ Manage acquisitions of resources and materials for the library
   ¨ Analyze the information needs of the community
   ¨ Formulate and implement policies to broaden services
   ¨ Plan services for the public
   ¨ Administer the library budget
   ¨ Administer personnel relations
   ¨ Manage relationships with other libraries
   ¨ Catalogue and classify library materials
   ¨ Label books and other documents
   ¨ Book binding
   ¨ Make posters and other promotional materials for the library
   ¨ Participate in library extension activities (theater works, music, workshops, films, storytelling, etc.)
   Other (Specify.)

_____
_____
_____

To cite this article as an online journal:

Hernández Pacheco, Federico and Diana Quezada Escamilla. 2016. "Human resources in Mexican public libraries: and exploratory inquiry". Investigación Bibliotecológica: Archivonomía, Bibliotecología e Información. 68: 17-50. [Include URL here] Consulted on: [Include date here]

To cite this article from an information service:

Hernández Pacheco, Federico and Diana Quezada Escamilla. 2016. "Human resources in Mexican public libraries: and exploratory inquiry". Investigación Bibliotecológica: Archivonomía, Bibliotecología e Información. 68: 17-50. [Include name of information service and URL] Consulted on: [Include date here]

❧