

‘SLOW LIBRARIANSHIP’ IN SWEDEN

An exploration of sustainable librarianship

Katharina Stumpf

Examensarbete (30 högskolepoäng) i biblioteks- och informationsvetenskap för
masterexamen inom ABM-masterprogrammet vid Lunds universitet.

Handledare: Karen Louise Grova Søylen

År: 2026

Titel

‘Slow librarianship’ i Sverige. En undersökning av hållbart bibliotekarieskap.

Abstract

The slow librarianship movement aims at re-introducing a qualitative, socially sustainable practice into the library and is a response to neoliberalism’s presence within the library sphere. ‘Slow librarianship’ as a concept emerged actively in the USA within the last decade. This thesis takes ‘slow librarianship’ into a Swedish context. It seeks to examine in how far Swedish librarians are familiar with this concept, and if they make use of practices that can be considered to fall under slow librarianship practices. It also seeks to identify what obstacles Swedish librarians encounter when trying to work according to ‘slow’, qualitative, reflective practices. This is to find out which factors contribute to an unsustainable working environment within a Swedish context, and what kind of change is necessary to create sustainable working conditions for qualitative librarian work.

The research material was gathered through eight interviews and a qualitative questionnaire. Respondents include both academic and public librarians, covering wide-spread geographical ground within Sweden. This thesis finds that a majority of Swedish librarians have on the whole good working conditions, yet also see potentials for slow librarianship, and that around half of the respondents are able to work sustainably. It further finds that there are three main detrimental factors to qualitative and successful library work. These are: a neoliberal working culture regardless of library type; a lack of reasonable and relevant priorities within the library as an institution; as well as a lack of a clear librarian role or identity, which has partly been brought about by new public management, and library role and expectation changes around the millennial shift. This thesis suggests that slow librarianship conversations could be fruitful within Sweden for all library types.

Keywords

Library, Information, Slow Librarianship, Reflective Practice, Swedish Libraries, Sustainability, Neoliberalism, Working Conditions, Librarian Work Environment

Förord

Till en början vill jag hjärtligt tacka alla bibliotekarier som visade ett intresse för min studie och som gick med på att delta i den. Det betyder väldigt mycket att ni var villiga att ge ett så personligt tema eftertanke, och att så många tog sig tiden att berätta om sina egna erfarenheter och synpunkter. Den här uppsatsen hade inte funnits utan er. Jag är väldigt tacksam för er tid, omsorg och era bidrag, och för att ni hade förtroende för mig genom att så öppet dela med er av era perspektiv.

Jag vill även ge ett stort, varmt tack till min handledare Karen för hennes mycket berikande konstruktiva stöd och vägledning under flera månader.

Slutligen vill jag heja alla bibliotekarier där ute och det otroligt värdefulla arbetet ni gör dagligen.

Katharina Stumpf
Lund, 31 Maj 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	6
What is slow librarianship.....	6
Aim and research questions.....	10
Background.....	12
Principles of slow librarianship.....	12
Good, human(e), thoughtful.....	12
Caring and community.....	13
Anti-racist practice.....	14
Reflective practice.....	15
Sustainable leadership.....	16
Concrete strategy ideas for a personal SL practice.....	16
Criticisms of slow librarianship.....	17
Slow librarianship for the public library?.....	17
Slow librarianship – an exclusive practice?.....	19
Theory.....	22
Slow librarianship as a theoretical concept.....	22
Institutional theory.....	23
Practice theory.....	24
A feminist ethics of care.....	26
Method.....	28
Disclaimers.....	28
Selection.....	29
Interviews.....	29
Questionnaires.....	30
Selection considerations.....	31
Material analysis.....	32
Risks.....	33
Ethics.....	34
Results and analysis.....	35
Swedish librarian reality.....	35
General librarian circumstances.....	35
Considering the individual library.....	36
Interview results.....	38
Public libraries.....	38
Academic libraries.....	42
Questionnaire results.....	46
Disclaimer and method reflections.....	48

Public libraries.....	51
Academic libraries.....	55
Patterns: a list of common practices and challenges.....	62
General work environment themes.....	62
Librarians' reported experiences.....	63
Discussion.....	67
Returning to my research questions.....	68
Change through sustainable practice.....	69
Public vs academic libraries.....	72
Slow librarianship at every library?.....	72
References.....	76
Appendix.....	82

Introduction

What is slow librarianship

Slow food, slow living, slow scholarship, slow librarianship – those are all movements that actively call for a slowing down in an increasingly fast-paced world. These explicit calls have been around since at least the late 20th century (cf. Honoré 2004; Slow Food Foundation), and if anything have only become more relevant and pressing, as humanity, even to its detriment, is far from slowing down. To work in a neoliberal, late-stage capitalist society means to sacrifice much of worth and value, and not least one's own health and well-being as a human (cf. Rosa 2013). As we continue under these conditions, the 21st century has therefore seen a further increase in demands for a 'slowing down', i.e. for a returning to quality, mindful presence and human connection over quantity, speed and profit.

The cultural sector is not exempt from these developments¹. Neither are universities, which are home to some libraries and have long been criticised for their increased neoliberalism (Nicholson 2019). The democratic and critical thinking values, that educational institutes and libraries are often intended to be proponents of, suffer from societal work culture norms spilling over into these same institutes (Olssen & Peters 2005). This can amongst other easily have the effect of librarians being prevented from carrying out their valuable work well, as neoliberalism disregards and inhibits qualitative work (Buschman 2020b; Nicholson 2019, p. 3-4). Working without stress or time pressure; with full attention to one's surroundings, patrons and tasks; according to democratic values of information accessibility; building genuine relationships with patrons and co-workers while improving the media literacy of the people – this is many a librarian's notion that however in its entirety rarely corresponds to reality (Alm Dahlin 2021; Hantera Agera 2025; Smith, Bazalar & Wheeler 2020). Many actual librarians are not able to work slowly and mindfully (Alm Dahlin 2021; see Johnson 2024; Smith, Bazalar & Wheeler 2020). Contemporary librarians' high burnout rates have been written about extensively (see Smith, Bazalar & Wheeler 2020). A 2017 Swedish study suggests that librarians at the time had similar long-term stress levels as hospital nurses (Weilenmann 2017).

1 For an interesting philosophical dealing with our current incessantly measuring society, in Swedish and specifically in relation to more social or human-centred work sectors, see Jonna Bornemark's *Det Omätbaras Renässans* (2018).

Among the chief contributing factors to reduced work-life quality are neoliberal frameworks (Mountz et al. 2015, p. 1237; Nicholson 2019, p. 21). Neoliberalism is a specific form of capitalism, where “[r]ather than operating along more traditional lines of pursuing the public good (rather than profits) by enhancing civil society and social justice, neoliberals call for the employment of governmental technologies that are taken from the world of business and commerce” (Steger & Roy 2021, p. 13). This results in a focus on profit, self-interested individuals’ power, quantity and measured successes over human-centred values, manifesting itself in various organisational structure details (ibid.). Neoliberalism, together with the related yet distinct phenomenon of new public management (NPM), has become an implemented norm in various work sectors, even cultural and social ones, in the last several decades (see Dutta, Knafo & Lovering 2023). Much of how librarians’ role and responsibilities have changed since the millennial shift has been impacted by NPM changes, creating new challenges for librarians in navigating job expectations. Slow librarianship offers a response to the neoliberal working environment and challenges its norms, in an outcry against that work culture’s lack of sustainability and humanity.

Slow librarianship was inspired by the slow food movement², and builds therefore on its tradition and its name. It therewith carries on the slow food movement’s concerns into other areas of society and life, as has been done before and since in other disciplines (such as the closely related ‘slow scholarship’³). ‘Slow’ in this case stands as an opposite to ‘fast’, yet more so to the ethics of ‘fast’ culture, which often sacrifice quality for the satisfaction of speed, quantity, and results that can be clearly measured. Anything concerned with timeless or time-consuming processes; with labour requiring full presence of heart and mind; communication; negotiation; that yields results which cannot be defined clearly and immediately, falls away as too troublesome and not worthy of the resources used. The short-term effect is prioritised over the long-term effect, and in this lies fast culture’s detriment. ‘Slow’ could therefore also be replaced with words such as ‘present’, ‘mindful’, ‘reflective’, ‘conscious’ or ‘qualitative’⁴. It is less about moving and acting literally slowly in any and every case, and more about taking the moment

2 The slow food movement was born in 1986 from a protest in Italy against a newly built fast-food restaurant, a McDonald’s, by the Spanish Steps in Rome, which was taken as an affront and sign of cultural homogenization by many (Slow Food Foundation). The movement’s key values are “good, clean, fair” – for food to be tasty; produced fairly; be healthy and sustainable for all involved parties; made and consumed under communal and ethical principles.

3 See e.g. Berg & Seeber’s *The Slow Professor* (2016); or Mountz et al. (2015).

4 As Carlo Petrini, the internationally recognised founder of the Slow Food movement, himself summarised (beyond a mere binary of slow-fast): “[the] real difference in quality among these experiences [slow or fast] does not lie in how much time is devoted to them, but in the will and the capacity to experience them attentively” (Petrini 2015, p. 33).

of time to consider what one is doing, how, why, and to reflect on one's actions, processes, and their consequences, throughout as well as afterwards. To take the time to ensure quality does not fall victim to efficiency (Frank 2026, p. 41; see Hilburger, Richmond & Wilkes 2026, p. 84). Thus, as the term 'slow librarianship' calls up images which do not sit well with most librarians – the old, persisting prejudice that working in a library is slow, quiet, relaxing and that librarians enjoy an excellent work life with little stress (Smith, Bazalar & Wheeler 2020) – the name points more to its origins than to the entirety of the movement's purpose.

For most of us, existing in a late-stage capitalist society, with its definition of productivity and valuable existence, is the norm and has become our subconscious programming. Its unsustainability is both a matter of course and a reality we take as an inescapable given; the goal is survival of and distraction from it. Yet as slow librarianship writer Meredith Farkas points out, "Neoliberal thinking remains powerful simply because people have been led to believe no better system is possible" (Farkas 2026, p. 18). She quotes adrienne brown's statement that "imagination is one of the spoils of colonization" (ibid., cf. brown 2017). If we want to achieve a better, more humane life, it is important that we keep imagining and turning unthought-of dreams into reality. By beginning with slow librarianship writings, actions and imaginations, we open the road for change and put the gears into motion.

Julia Glassman paved a significant way into the slow librarianship conversation with her 2017 article "The Innovation Fetish And Slow Librarianship: What Librarians Can Learn From The Juicero", in which she likens the contemporary neoliberal library to a Silicon Valley nonsense invention (the Juicero) for the sake of profit (Glassman 2017). Meredith Farkas has since been one of the major librarians and researchers to pick up on that term and expand on it. Slow librarianship ruminations have begun to spread particularly during and since the Covid-19 pandemic in the early 2020s and particularly in North America, as more and more librarians feel the explicit and pressing need for slower, i.e. more mindful, work practices. On her blog, *Information Wants To be Free*, Farkas has written extensively on the topic and suggested the most widely used and succinctly phrased definition of slow librarianship to date:

Slow librarianship is an antiracist, responsive, and values-driven practice that stands in opposition to neoliberal values. Workers in slow libraries are focused on relationship-building, deeply understanding and meeting patron needs, and providing equitable services to their communities. Internally, slow library culture

is focused on learning and reflection, collaboration and solidarity, valuing all kinds of contributions, and supporting staff as whole people. Slow librarianship is a process, not a destination; it is an orientation towards our work, ourselves, and others that creates positive change. It is an organizational philosophy that supports workers and builds stronger relationships with our communities.

Farkas 2021

The different mindful practices united and suggested under the name ‘slow librarianship’ are however nothing new, many of them even being a constituent and seemingly natural part of how educated and engaged librarians work, when given the room and circumstances to do their job well. Librarianship is, after all, as Nick Poole from the British library association CILIP so aptly phrases, not merely about measurable productivity or being an information expert. It is equally about being an expert in the cultures, communities, societies that create, circulate and use that information; about the power dynamics present in them, and how those dynamics shape our information behaviour (Poole 2023). This is both goal and practice within the library sector and LIS education. Librarianship today is often a deeply interconnected, intersectional, critical and communal knowledge and practice, in which one has to remain open for learning and others’ perspectives. Slow librarianship (SL) returns to exactly that, to a holistic, communal, and value-driven practice.

The SL concept sparks discussion amongst librarians in different corners of the world, yet it is still a relatively young and small research area. In early 2026, the book *Slow Librarianship: Reflections and Practices*, edited by academic librarian Ashley Rosener has been published. It gathers 23 chapters of academic research and writing by different librarian authors, indicating a slowly spreading and gathering interest in SL as an established concept and research topic. I will draw extensively on the findings presented in this book⁵. Proponents of the idea make clear that, in grappling with neoliberalism’s influence on the library sector, slow librarianship does not solve the root problem, yet it can be the beginning of moving in a better direction (Brady 2023, p. 32) and point to the need for changing the (root) status quo. Efforts are being and need to be made in order to make the library sector more human- and value-centred again, both in its mechanisms as well as its effects on patrons, staff, and society. Slow librarianship is a concept and movement that answers to this, tangible and clear in its value position and practice suggestions, vague as it though otherwise may be. Though previous research mainly concerns itself with academic libraries in North

⁵ It is also to be recommended as an introduction to SL as well as for concrete strategies and real-life application examples especially.

America, I see no reason for such a limitation. Neoliberalism is a defining environment factor for all library types and also in Sweden (cf. Uppsala Universitet, which offers a programme on neoliberalism in the Nordic countries), which is why I believe slow librarianship conversations to be fruitful, relevant and needed within Swedish libraries too.

Aim and research questions

The intention of this thesis is thus to contribute to further knowledge about the concept of ‘slow librarianship’ in a Swedish context. My research interest is motivated by the recent decades’ critique of unsustainable working conditions at libraries (Smith, Bazalar & Wheeler 2020). I am interested in the presence (or lack) of mindful and sustainable work practices within the Swedish library sector, as well as in the present working conditions and how they facilitate or hinder practices that can be summarised under the term ‘slow librarianship’. In order to answer this query, I have made use of the following research questions:

1. Do Swedish librarians think about slow librarianship or related concepts in their practice? If yes, how important do they deem this concept in and for their work?
2. Which slow librarianship practices do Swedish librarians make use of in their everyday work?
3. If they are kept from slow work practices, which obstacles do Swedish librarians encounter when trying to work according to slow librarianship principles?

I thereby use the concept of ‘slow librarianship’ as an umbrella term for mindful, (personally or socially) sustainable and qualitative practices, and have explained this to the people I interviewed for my thesis. As I will expand on in my method chapter, I have made use of eight interviews and a qualitative questionnaire, with both academic and public librarians, in order to collect material on librarians’ experiences and opinions. My main interest lies in identifying patterns in Swedish librarians’ working conditions and practices, and how they relate to (the need for) slow librarianship. A more personal goal of mine is to advocate for sustainable work practices within the library sector, as I believe librarian work to be incredibly enriching and vital for society, and I hope to encourage and facilitate the conversation around slow librarianship amongst Swedish librarians. I find SL useful as a concrete concept to consult and refer to when discussing sustainable

and value-centred practices, and I believe it might give a clear term for and academic reference point to much that librarians are struggling and grappling with in their everyday work life.

This thesis begins in the following chapter with a more elaborate background on the slow librarianship concept, which is followed by a theory chapter on the academic perspectives and lenses used in this thesis. There I expand on institutional, practice, and feminist theories. The fourth chapter presents my research methods (interview and questionnaire) and precedes the chapters of results, analysis and discussion. The thesis thereby divides itself into an initial more theoretical half and a following more practical half. In the former, slow librarianship as a theorised movement lies at the centre, whereas the latter presents my study findings and Swedish librarian realities. SL is however by far no mere abstract concept, and is deeply rooted in applicable practice, as I will expand on. In the final discussion, I tie my introduction of SL into the Swedish sphere together with the actual results I obtained. A Swedish-language appendix with my used methods, documents, and questions to Swedish librarians is to be found at the very end of this thesis.

Background

Slow librarianship literature unites successful attempts to circle in a concrete definition, offer tangible strategies to translate SL principles into real everyday actions at one's work place, and encourage the reader to reflect on one's own librarianship and (lack of) sustainable work practices. It thereby unites theory with practice and concrete real-life application, as it aims to be theoretical and imaginative in nature; critical of unsustainable practices; and to present clear suggestions for actual change – one of the movement's chief goals being changing the structural reality of librarianship from the inside out, so that all librarians are able to work sustainably.

In the following, I outline the defining codes of practice of slow librarianship based in academic writing on the topic. I will return to keywords and practices presented here in my analysis, and parallels to this chapter's contents will also become visible to the reader in the later results of my research material.

Principles of slow librarianship

Good, human(e), thoughtful

As slow librarianship takes its inspiration from the slow food movement and its principles 'good, clean, and fair', Meredith Farkas has suggested 'good, human(e), and thoughtful' as SL's cornerstones (Farkas 2021)⁶. 'Good' means being a good institution for the people – to be aware of and to challenge libraries' racist structures; to know and serve the real needs of the library's specific community; to prioritise the most vulnerable patrons; to hold values and valuable work (not profit) as the driving factor of the library institution (Farkas 2021; 2026, p. 15). 'Human(e)' focuses on staff well-being; on bringing an ethics of care into the institution where workers can and do support each other with their individual needs; on leaving behind individualistic culture and acknowledging human interdependence; on relationship-building instead of competition; on creativity, and psychological safety to articulate one's concerns and needs at the workplace, all being built into the library's organisational structure (Farkas 2021; 2026, p. 16). 'Thoughtful' concerns a reflective practice with no "sense of urgency", so that the library can become a "true learning organization" (Farkas 2026, p. 16) and

6 For a concise, well-phrased and understandable explanation of and elaboration on these terms, consult Farkas' writing directly (the beginning of Farkas' 2021 blog entry for a shorter, Farkas' 2026 anthology chapter for a slightly longer version). I summarise and paraphrase briefly here, which does not do justice to the wonderful phrasing and concrete examples Farkas takes up in her texts.

librarians can take time to develop their skills and services, work collaboratively, centre patron needs, and prioritise tasks consciously according to relevance and value (Farkas 2021; Farkas 2026, p. 16).

Caring and community

The slow librarianship movement is deeply feminist in nature⁷. Beside its consideration of intersectional feminist perspectives, accessibility and anti-racist work, a feminist ethics of care is part of its central understandings of librarian responsibility and sustainable action. I will expand more on a feminist ethics of care in the following ‘theory’ chapter, however I wish to highlight here in my description of SL in which ways (such) a focus on care features within it. The SL movement is conscious of the librarian necessity to actively partake in relationship- and trust-building, and of that this has to be nurtured continuously and over the years (Gibb 2026, p. 192). As libraries continue to develop in an intensely technological time, there is an awareness among Slow⁸ librarians that “technology does not offer us an escape from vulnerability and interdependence” (Mann 2026, p. 247). There is an acknowledgement of care ethics; that human beings are interconnected, not of an infinite individual capability, situated in their bodies, and in need of each other (ibid., p. 246). Caring within librarianship means sitting with challenging situations, caring about creating sustainable and fair processes, caring about each other as co-workers, and caring about patrons. It shows up in practices such as “listening deeply, collaborating, mentoring, maintaining, and holding space for difference”, as well as communicating openly about work-life boundaries and personal needs (ibid., p. 254). A feminist ethics of care recognises the unfair distribution of labour and the differences of expectations placed on different bodies (especially on feminised and racialised bodies) (MacKay 2019). It shines a light on the (human and other) infrastructures

7 My understanding of feminism is inherently intersectional and concerned with the oppression of all marginalised groups, not merely with cisgender, white, heterosexual women. This is because oppression is intersectional (see Crenshaw 1989; 1991) and cannot be seen in isolation, and because I believe that the freedom of one group ought not to come at the expense of the oppression of another.

8 I use Slow, slow, and ‘slow’ somewhat interchangeably throughout, yet capitalise the first letter at times in order to denote the difference between the Slow movement and literal slowness. My use of this word thereby consciously differs in stylisation based on the context at hand. A majority of SL literature uses only the non-stylised word slow, also meaning it as the movement and toying with the various connotations of the word standing by itself. I slot myself into this tradition, also only stylising ‘slow librarianship’ as such when I wish to highlight the concept as something unusual or unknown in the immediate context. By not highlighting slow (librarianship) as something exceptional, I wish to encourage the reading of the word ‘slow’ as multi-faceted and complex in meaning, especially when taken together with the word ‘librarianship’. I also wish to encourage the reading of ‘slow librarianship’ as yet another type of ‘natural’ librarianship (practice), which can be identified, chosen, or rejected. With this, I hope to aid SL’s naturalisation into librarianship conversations. I am unfamiliar with SL writers’ reasons for not stylising the word(s) and cannot speak on that.

of institutions such as the library, and on instances such as the unequal recognition of ‘maintenance’ library work, which is often carried out by women; underappreciated and de-centred (Kozuira & Becker 2024). Slow librarianship’s use of an ethics of care thereby both recognises and challenges the inequality processes highlighted by this ethics, and further applies its perspective by also recognising the importance of care and by practicing caring work.

Anti-racist practice

David Hudson takes up the obsession with practicality that reigns within the Library and Information Sciences (LIS) sector and brings to attention its and neoliberalism’s⁹ white supremacist origin (Hudson 2017). He criticises the lack of support for purely theoretical research contributions within LIS, as well as the LIS norm which equals a research text’s instant practical applicability with it being a valuable contribution (Hudson 2017, pp. 208-209). This is further a neoliberal norm in itself, in which libraries constantly strive to prove their worth to society through tangible, measurable output and profit numbers (Buschman 2020b; Nicholson 2019, p. 3). The issue lies not in the practical aspect of the library sector and its research itself – it lies in being closed off on principle towards anything that poses more questions than it generates answers; that is not clearly definable or knowable from previous standards; anything that holds room for diversity. The “implicit dismissal of all understood to be impractical” within the library sector is a racist practice and one of many implicit problematic library norms (Hudson 2017, p. 206). SL connects to this in its demand for letting things take room and time which are at first glance seemingly impractical, initially more work, or require effort (Frank 2026) – much of which is the case for qualitative and longterm sustainable practices. There are ways librarians can approach their work which resist the continuation and reinforcement of libraries’ white supremacist structures. One way is to recognise “the value of questions without answers and the value of language that pushes beyond common-sense meanings” (Hudson 2017, p. 206) – something that is echoed in slow librarianship’s call for openness, patience and the centring of meaning and human connection.

Slow librarianship as an initially American concept is conscious of the American library having been born from white supremacist circumstances and being built on its norms¹⁰. Swedish (library) history differs from American history, Swedish libraries are however not exempt from the context of a colonialist past (Hansson

⁹ See also Aspinall & Duncan (2026); Kundnani (2021); Scarrit (2022).

¹⁰ For a well-presented overview of racism within American library history, as well as how that relates to librarian critical practice, see Oliver (2022).

2023), and the topic of racism also plays a relevant role in Sweden. Attempts of and disputes about anti-racist work and collection choices in Swedish libraries are an ongoing topic (see Eriksson 2021; Jones 2015). A self image of being a ‘good’ society without a racism problem moreover persists in Swedish society, and contributes to library dealings with the topic (Clemens 2024). Sweden also has an indigenous population and the ongoing decolonisation process leaves room for improvement in all aspects to be desired (see Hansson 2011; Lindh & Haider 2010).

Part of SL practice is likewise recognising that many of our work culture norms have in themselves a white supremacist origin and structure, and refusing neoliberal practices for the sake of an anti-racist work ethic (Farkas 2021). Moreover, “neoliberal doctrine ... diminishes the process of acquiring critical skill sets and reduces dialogue” (Liu & Fallis 2026, p. 330). Even apart from neoliberalism’s racist roots, its pressure to speed up and deliver quantifiable output and fast solutions hurries librarians into quick fixes and less reflected-on decisions. Lindsay Gibb (2026) explores for instance options of sustainable, critical and reflective collection acquisition, also from smaller, local vendors. She mentions the importance of librarians actively *building* diversity and anti-racism *into* the library collections and acquisition processes, instead of simply thinking of it briefly while making one-time purchasing choices (Gibb 2026, p. 187). This is work that requires depth, relationship-building, time and research, as well as a familiarisation with how Western libraries and cultures start from a white colonialist legacy and how that is mirrored in our collections, default systems and choice options (ibid.).

Reflective practice

Berg and Seeber (2016) in their exploration of slow scholarship mention the importance of reflection and thinking time within scholarship, that it is not a luxury but of essence (quoted in Frank 2026, p. 46). The same is true for librarianship. Much of the nature and value requirements of (slow) librarianship and (slow) scholarship overlap, not least in the intersection at the academic library. It is easy to forego reading, research, and reflection time amid time pressures and in a neoliberal work space, to do so is however vitally detrimental to the librarian craft. Librarians with more stability, leadership support, and autonomy in their role might be able to implement practices such as not rushing a project process, and letting the qualitative, time-consuming *process*, rather than the initial *plans*, dictate the deadlines and result timeline (as modeled by Gervasio,

Detterbeck & Oling 2026, p. 130). Slow (i.e. mindful) assessment is also possible (see *ibid.*), and a stressful, high demand library environment should not come at the expense of reflective working habits. Even in critical moments, e.g. in an escalating patron meeting, can a habit of reflective practice (through for instance the keeping of a “reflection-in-action” journal) offer an anchor of support in similar future situations (Pope 2026, p. 105-106). Reflective practice has the aim and effect of developing self-awareness, a learning mindset, of challenging assumptions, and equipping the librarian with tools to address and better understand complex situations and dynamics (*ibid.*, p. 103). It moreover goes hand in hand with SL’s communal solidarity aspect, in which healthy leadership and strong bonds of colleague support make possible a culture of reflective practice among librarians. Reflective practice is equally vital for a healthy and transformative leadership style which permits for sustainable work places (*ibid.*, p. 106).

Sustainable leadership

Regardless of job title or position at the library, “establishing trust, agreeing on core values, and being transparent in communication are all essential” (Jackson, Deaver & Solomon 2026, p. 123). Slow librarianship must however also be a priority among library directors and leaders for it to gain traction and establish itself among the staff. Leaders must “model [SL] values, challenge efficiency-driven expectations, and cultivate teams prioritizing meaningful engagement over constant output. This is about resisting harmful work cultures and reshaping them from within, beginning with us” (*ibid.*, p. 124). SL writers propose that good leaders ought to have awareness about the library’s systemic and problematic structures; know their staff’s individual strengths and needs and treat them accordingly; foster a culture of support among staff; be dedicated to creating a caring and qualitative organisation; prioritise staff well-being and set realistic expectations; and be humane and make the library a humane place for all involved people (*ibid.*, pp. 125-127). Leaders should thereby actively work with and for making the library a slow librarian organisation for librarians and patrons alike. Their role and power in shaping work culture, expectations and norms is invaluable and key for achieving sustainable libraries on the whole.

Concrete strategy ideas for a personal SL practice

Jacqueline Frank (2026) is amongst the SL writers listing concrete strategies for a sustainable and Slow librarianship. She suggests starting with rest and the essentials first – blocking off time in one’s calendar (even far into the future and

without compromising on these blocks when last-minute requests pop up) for sleep/rest, personal life, recreation, as well as for important work tasks, and to structure the remainder around these blocks with realistic expectations (Frank 2026, p. 47). She also suggests only having three active priorities at a time, having a weekly scheduling ritual (ibid., p. 48), embracing imperfections (especially with trivial tasks) and strategically delaying anything that does not fit, which even helps with realising what is really important (ibid., p. 49). Further strategies are (how) to say ‘no’, as well as having ‘no’ as a default answer and only saying ‘yes’ to conscious choices; limiting email (responses) to a small window in the day (preferably evening) and doing important work first and without interruptions; and making personally valuable use of small gaps of time (ibid., pp. 50-52). Rivera and Semrau (2026) write, like Frank, about academic libraries, the advice can however be transferred to all library types. They suggest to form intentional relationships with collaboration partners (such as university faculty and other library staff), to support all staff well-being and healthy bonds, and to reflect on and celebrate successes together to foster a supportive and inspiring culture (Rivera & Semrau 2026, pp. 64-65). The focus of SL lies on producing less, rather than necessarily doing less (Farkas 2021), in identifying what is essential to one’s practice and librarianship (Frank 2026, p. 42) and in being intentional with one’s energy (ibid., p. 46).

Criticisms of slow librarianship

Slow librarianship for the public library?

Seeing as the focus of currently available SL literature is on academic libraries or written mostly by academic librarians, there are fewer concrete strategies that can be directly applied at public libraries or answer to specific public librarian needs. The suggested practices available can however be transferred to public library contexts and most of them are also applicable there, even if they might not cover the entire public librarian activity range. Much of the applicability depends also on the individual library. I deem that the existing literature provides an inspiring stepping stone for further ideas for other and all library types which librarians can think about among themselves. The general veins of SL address needs of all library types – in its focus on patron and staff wellbeing, reflective practice, qualitative interactions, sustainable work environment structures, and longterm sustainable dealing with fraught and loaded situations. Much within public librarianship requires responding to conflicts in the moment and mediating between people, which often results in quick, on-the-spot solutions and can be emotionally taxing for librarians. Anticipating such situations and working

longterm with how to respond to them is valuable internal library work, and also requires critical reflection, research, use of external resources, and transparent communication among staff and directors – things SL argues for.

There is moreover a big overlap in SL theory and Swedish library research, goals, and criticism, as much of SL supports qualitative librarianship and that is what (Swedish) librarians on the whole equally strive for. The Swedish library sector has a particular emphasis on the library's role for upholding and creating democracy, and prioritising vulnerable social groups (Swedish Library Act Bibliotekslagen SFS 2013:801), which comes with its myriad of challenges, yet also in its essence centres around the need for qualitative librarianship. This means that Swedish librarians are deeply preoccupied with how to hold the balance in their work to live up to this extensive democratic task, as well as how to guarantee longterm, qualitative library work outcomes for all people in Sweden. It also means that there are frequent impulses and research such as Rivano Eckerdal and Engström's recommendation text (2024) from the European ILIT project on strengthening public librarians' social role and providing the right circumstances to support librarians in the valuable work that they do. The authors there argue for facilitating librarian relationship-building, for staff to be present and approachable in the public rooms, for enough financial means to support the valuable work librarians do, for librarians to communicate amongst themselves about clear work priorities and boundaries, to have qualitative evaluation systems based in real librarian and patron experiences instead of in quantity measures, and to trust librarians' professionalism and skills (Rivano Eckerdal & Engström 2024, p. 7). Much of this overlaps with SL demands, and it also means that Swedish librarians already have the interest, research and resources arguing for such sustainable change and modelling qualitative library practices.

For a more applicable and wide-spread slow librarianship theory, the field would however benefit from more writings on other library types beyond the academic library, as the university is not the only reflective learning, teaching and meeting place impacted by neoliberalism (Buschman 2020a). The fact that academic librarians are more likely to engage in research and writing processes than public librarians can also serve as an explanation as well as a point for criticism here. All librarians should be able to, if they so wish, take the room and be encouraged to connect over their experiences, follow their curiosity, research and write. This connects back to David Hudson's aforementioned point on the prioritisation of practicality over theory. It also connects to reflective practice, as it would benefit any librarian and their institution if they were to have the room and time to sit

with and partake in the processes of research and writing. Not least, public librarians writing more extensively and also theoretically grounded about their work experiences would moreover lead to more other public librarians feeling seen and supported in their experiences. It could further lead to more communal conversations between librarians, resulting in better solutions to existing problems, and important joyful and inspiring connection moments for the librarians.

Slow librarianship – an exclusive practice?

A potential pitfall of slow librarianship can be that not everyone has the option to choose to engage in it. Workers with chronic disabilities have no choice but to work (literally) slower than their able-bodied co-workers and are often punished for not performing to normalised expectations (Kaufman, Chennault & Molana 2024) – at the same time as that does not make their work practice more sustainable. Librarians, as well as all humans, are diverse – with diverse skills, needs, backgrounds, life circumstances. SL calls for taking that into consideration and honouring every librarian as a whole person (the ‘human(e)’ tenet). The more autonomy a librarian has over their working time and weekly tasks, the more they have the opportunity to implement Slow work practices (Frank 2026, p. 47). Different librarians work under different structures and circumstances, and every librarian’s work environment is dependent on their superiors’ support and choices.

This is why, in order to ensure sustainable practices for every librarian and within librarianship on the whole, structural change is necessary. As Brittini Ballard (2026) phrases it:

... slow librarianship through a disability lens isn’t a set of practices but a fundamental reimagining of whose ways of being, learning, and working are considered valid. ... Rather than frantically trying to conform to existing structures, we might instead recognize that the breaking of those structures offers a rare and necessary opening.

Ballard 2026, p. 432

The neoliberal working place is particularly punishing towards people considered to fall outside of the (performance) norm, which disabled and neurodivergent librarians are forced to especially suffer from (Ballard 2026, pp. 417-419). As I will return to in the theory chapter; structural change can be achieved through individual change leading to collective change – if enough individual librarians decide to act differently in their everyday lives and change their personal work (and life) ethic. Structural change can also be achieved through structural change

– if change at organisational levels is demanded, pushed for, and implemented. It is an important part of slow librarianship that structural and institutional change is (to be) actively fought for (Farkas 2026, p. 17), at the same time as the Slow librarian works as sustainably as they can under the circumstances they (as yet continue to) have. Otherwise, slow librarianship will not be a truly sustainable and longterm implemented practice in itself.

That slow librarianship is “only for the privileged” (Farkas 2026, p. 17), who can already work slowly with no repercussions, therefore makes up one of the key criticisms of the movement; yet SL immediately refutes that criticism. It is a key pillar of SL that its focus lies on “collective liberation, solidarity, and community care” (Farkas 2026, p. 17). Notably, as Farkas emphasises,

Slow librarianship requires us to look beyond ourselves to try to help create the conditions that allow *everyone* to slow down. That means that those of us with more job security and autonomy need to fight structures that create precarity, scarcity, and competition. ... If those of us who have privilege are not focused on supporting our colleagues who don't, we are not practicing slow librarianship — we are only practicing self-liberation.

Farkas 2021; original emphasis

The movement rejects a criticism of being exclusive; on the contrary, the real inability of some librarians to participate in SL proves the need for the slow librarianship movement, because it highlights the structural exclusion of certain groups of people from a sustainable work life. The goal is therefore to make possible everyone's (voluntary and conscious) participation in sustainable (i.e. Slow) librarianship, and transforming libraries on the whole into socially sustainable institutions – through one's own SL practices and the utilisation of SL as a movement. It is here that the tension of aiming to change the root status quo (see introduction) lives: SL will not succeed in abolishing neoliberalism overnight – however, the SL movement might, with the effort of enough interested and dedicated librarians, transform enough libraries into qualitative work places so that this changes the expectations and norms for libraries as institutions. Our society might not change (immediately) with such movements as SL, yet at the least librarianship could slowly become accessible and not only for the privileged. This is norm-critical work, and work that asks which kind of a society we want to live and work in.

A closer look at slow librarianship as a theoretical tool is to be found in the following theory chapter. For more extensive descriptions of what makes up SL in

detail, I would like to refer interested readers to SL literature such as the so far mentioned, as I now turn the focus more towards my study.

Theory

Slow librarianship as a theoretical concept

My work centres around the concept of ‘slow librarianship’, which is not an established theory in itself, yet carries aspects of such and can be or is even used as a theoretical perspective. In the ways that I refer to SL theoretically, I do so grounded in the work of previous SL researchers. My research is amongst other interested in if certain existing librarianship practices in Sweden can be read from a slow librarianship perspective, i.e. can be said to fall under the ‘SL practice’ umbrella. In this way, I also make use of SL as a theoretical lens when reading certain existing practices contained in my research results as SL practices. In other words, as my research concerns itself with the potential applicability of slow librarianship in Sweden, I interpret certain existing librarianship practices as slow librarianship practices, partly to highlight such ‘slow’ practices’ existence and relevance, partly to point to the parallels that can be drawn from Swedish librarian reality to SL as a general and intentional practice.

It is, however, not my intention to claim that the librarians I interviewed participate (unbeknownst to themselves) in a Slow practice or act intentionally according to SL. This is neither clearly knowable to me nor is it plausible as a reality, also seeing as very few Swedish librarians seem to be familiar with the theoretical concept of ‘Slow Librarianship’ – meaning they cannot be practicing it intentionally or wholly as such. There is a distinction to be made between practices that *can* be considered ‘slow’, i.e. conscious and intentional, and which often fall under librarianship as it is commonly practised or aimed to be practised – the practices that I encounter in my research material –, and between Slow Librarianship practices as stemming from a librarian that consciously acts as a Slow librarian and uses SL as a theory after which they shape their work life and personal activism. Therefore, even when I draw parallels between existing Swedish librarian practices and their arguable ‘slowness’, I do not argue the explicit presence of Slow Librarianship in that situation. I merely wish to highlight the existing parallels and to invite to a further consideration of SL as a conscious and explicit practice and line of thought, if it might prove to be of value and service to Swedish librarians, at least in the questions it poses and the patterns it illuminates for our consideration.

Beyond this, I make use of practice and institutional theory, as well as feminist theory. The latter features both because it is integral to SL and due to my personal

working ethic as a researcher which is defined by an intersectional feminist lens. The feminist lens for me includes queer and postcolonial thought, and takes into consideration questions of accessibility as well as the diversity of patrons, librarians, and their needs. I mainly make use of practice, institutional, and feminist theory with the aim of analysing SL and to highlight how SL as a theory connects to aspects of other theories – the points in SL that refer or point back to previous theoretical explorations from these arguably related realms. It further serves to strengthen SL's claim and relevance, which I aim to explore. My theoretical meta-analysis of SL is however a mere starting point, as a thorough theoretical analysis of the concept exceeds the scope of this thesis. I consider my choice of theories however to be both relevant to an exploration of SL as a concept and useful for examining the space of the library as a working place. Librarians act within the constraint of the institution of the library, and both librarians and libraries are situated within and influenced by the wider societal context. A closer look at librarian practice and working environment thereby presupposes a closer look at the wider context and its dynamics, both of the library and of the librarian as an individual person, and at how these intersect and play with each other.

Institutional theory

Institutional theory suggests that our social environment and its norms bleed over into and shape our institutions (Eriksson-Zetterquist 2009, p. 7). Institutions are thereby not rational organisations, as human beings are not economically rational beings (*ibid.*, p. 6). This means simultaneously that an institution's participants, with their social norms and identities from life outside of the institution, are the institution's co-creators, as they embody and reinforce those norms within the institution and shape it to its resulting existence (Eriksson-Zetterquist 2009, p. 22; Jepperson 2002, p. 69). Organisations – in this case libraries – are therefore “constructions of institutionalized cultural environments, rather than being ‘hardwired’ and pregiven outside the social system” (Jepperson 2002, p. 69). New institutionalism highlights moreover that these embodied norms in turn reinforce the participants' identity (Eriksson-Zetterquist 2009, p. 109) – a circle of identity / acting according to norms / reinforcing identity is created. New institutionalism also maintains that an institution's rules and official codes of practice become matters of course over time (*ibid.*, p. 155) – what is written down becomes the unchallenged norm.

Scandinavian institutional theory further suggests that *trending* social notions bleed over and become rigid norms and matters of course within the institution (Eriksson-Zetterquist 2009, p. 155). It thereby also shines a light on the fluidity of these processes, which opens up for the option of change after reflection, critical discussion and dispute of existing norms (ibid., 155). Institutions' norms can be challenged and changed; the institution can be 'deinstitutionalised' ("avinstitutionalising" can happen) (ibid., p. 134). The Scandinavian branch of the theory points thereby to a simultaneous rigidity yet instability in the nature of institutions and their norm dynamics. This all means that social norms shape librarians, and that the organisation of the library does not go untouched by these norms. It also means that outside social pressures and interests impact the library directly, yet it is the librarians and directors within the library who decide by their everyday actions which norms will be implemented or resisted. I return to proof and exemplification of this from Swedish librarian reality in my analysis. It finally suggests that movements like slow librarianship can shape the library as an institution from within and help the library resist neoliberal structures imposed from outside – given both librarians and library directors are on board and prioritise slow librarianship values; and given that library directors stand strong against outside social and political influences and demands, protecting their organisation's librarians and the sustainable work conditions they are given.

Practice theory

This emphasis on and potential of decisions and actions connects to the insights of practice theory. One of the strengths of practice theory lies in its focus on everyday life and in how it thereby uncovers how everyday practices reproduce power relations (Blue 2026, p. 197). Practice theory emphasises the human situatedness in shared common practices, an embodied know-how that an individual finds themselves in and moulds into, which in turn creates social life (Schatzki, Knorr Cetina & von Savigny 2001, p. 12). Practice theory understands the very existence of social life and being through the study of practice (ibid.). Stanley Blue (2026) argues that practice-theoretical research should not merely focus on practices but most of all shine a light on the dynamics in question (Blue 2026, p. 198). His book *Practice Theory and Process Philosophy* (2026) argues for a more dynamic treatment and perception of practice theory: one that is more process-oriented and moves beyond the static footing that contemporary practice theory often has in its emphasis on identity (p. 12). This reevaluation would make for a practice theory that would acknowledge "change to be [a] fundamental condition of the world" rather than a fleeting aspect (pp. 13-14), thereby opening

up for the instability of the perceived status quo. Blue further considers practice theory without a philosophy of process to often “[overlook] the messiness and deep interconnectedness of the world”, blind to the more complex and hidden relations and dynamics at play in and beyond practice (p. 12), even as practice theory considers the temporal and spatial network of practices (p. 11). He discerns:

While practice theories decentre the individual, process philosophy has a more radical stance, challenging the notion of the individual as a stable analytic category. ... / ... It builds on the idea that we should think about entities not as discrete or stable but as dynamic assemblages continuously affecting and being affected by others.

Blue 2026, pp. 15-16

If one considers the study of practices and social realities from this perspective, a theory of slow librarianship with its belief in and call for change connects thereby to that dynamic state. Librarians and libraries as institutions are neither static in their being, nor actions, nor future practice. Change within unsustainable and quality-deprioritising structures is possible. Moreover,

A process-oriented approach reframes power as nomadic rather than static, that is, as *enabling* and circumscribing *rather than* constituted and *exercised*. Instead of locating power in specific practices, groups of practitioners, arrangements, ... [power] flows through the plenum of practices.

Blue 2026, p. 197; my emphases

This permits two conclusions relevant to SL. Firstly, power imbalances are (re)produced with each action instead of being inevitably dictated by structure, and can be consciously challenged and remade with one’s next action (for instance if one thinks about anti-racist practice). Secondly, it is the collective action of the practice that counts. The collective aspect is integral to SL, and it is the gateway through which positive change can be achieved – collective conscious practice leading to more of humane sustainability in libraries and librarians’ work reality collectively. As Blue further goes on to say,

Everyday life is no longer the site of the mundane, the non-exceptional, and non-political – it is exactly where power and politics play out. Describing the world as a dynamic configuration of practices creates opportunities for imagining, describing, and enacting alternative possibilities. This processual account transforms critique from an external and transcendental ideal into an active, integral, and generative process[.]

Blue 2026, p. 198

Slow Librarianship as a theory and a critique does not remain an ideal, instead it is exactly that active and generative process – through reflective practice – that SL writers claim it to be.

A feminist ethics of care

Seeing as slow librarianship is an anti-racist and human-centred concept, a feminist ethics of care is likewise embedded in its foundations. A feminist ethics of care is also a productive response to and within neoliberal pressures and cultures, as it counteracts neoliberal work practices (Bergland 2017) and “neoliberal violence” (Malatino, McKiernan & Clark Miller 2023, p. 6). A feminist branch of ethics developed towards the end of the 20th century from a need to consider a philosophy of ethics intersectionally, and with an acknowledgement of the actual, necessary and enriching human *interdependence* instead of subscribing to an illusion of human independence (MacKay 2019). It recognises the importance of the unique situation and its context in decision and action processes, while departing from an obsession with individualism – something SL also picks up on. SL builds on an emphasis on human interdependence and the necessity of caring for each other: that librarians hold a duty of care for their patrons, themselves, as well as their co-workers, as holistic, complex and diverse beings (e.g. Farkas 2021).

A feminist ethics of care straddles the tensions inherent in being conscious and critical of the traditionally feminised role of caring for others, while at the same time arguing for the necessity of care, and for an inclusion and recognition of the individuals (often women*) caught in interdependent networks of care that they cannot step out of to act individually (Szocik 2024, p. 17). This can be likened to SL’s recognition that one takes on a certain responsibility by consciously being a Slow librarian (especially if one is a societally marginalised person), and yet that one nevertheless has a responsibility of care as a librarian. More so: that by taking on the more complex responsibilities of SL, one practices a qualitative practice that is longlastingly beneficial for everyone. As Ann Bartos phrases it, quoting Joan Tronto:

Understanding care as a political concept, [Tronto] argued, arises when care is not seen as closely associated with women’s ‘natural’ disposition or as something that women do. Rather, ‘care can serve as both a moral value and as a basis for the political achievement of a good society’ (Tronto 1993, 9).

Bartos 2019, p. 768

It puts forward “care as a *social* need, not as an individual” one (ibid., original emphasis). Libraries recognise and work with that in their dealing with the systemic problem of socially marginalised patrons that have nowhere else but the library to go to, without the library being able to meet all their social needs.

An equally important aspect of a care-ful practice is moreover that one as a (librarian) care-giver equally cares for oneself in the process, centres mutual care within one’s surrounding (working) community, and recognises human interdependence as well as everyone’s essential need for rest. Not least, “Rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy” (Hersey 2022, p. 14). Tricia Hersey’s *Rest is Resistance* manifesto particularly highlights the political and vital act of rest for bodies suffering racial violence. Care is therefore never a meek practice, and its complexities connect to the other human- and value-centred pillars SL strives to uphold as a holistic and critical practice.

Having these theories and circumstances in mind, the later results will yield exemplifications of such caring practices that Swedish librarians partake in in their effort to do work of quality. As the Swedish library strives to serve all people in society, and particularly pay attention to marginalised and vulnerable groups (i.e. persons with disabilities; the national minorities; and persons with Swedish as a second language (SFS 2013:801, 4-5§)), caring work is to an extent built into Swedish librarian requirements even without SL. In that circumstance, SL becomes an emphasis that reminds librarians not to forget to care and to do so practically appropriately (e.g. considering real¹¹ needs of vulnerable patrons, not only presupposed or short-term needs). SL also goes further in reminding librarians to also care for themselves and each other, as they are the fundamental human resting pillars of a healthy library, and therefore need to be healthy, rested, cared-for humans too.

The upcoming chapter turns away from theory and towards this study’s method and material collection, before the results are presented.

11 As a questionnaire respondent also remarked, ‘real patron needs’ is in itself a fraught concept. Does that mean that one asks patrons for their opinions, or that one uses one’s professional insight as a librarian to assess real patron needs? Either and both can be misleading or short-sighted. Perhaps the balance lies somewhere in between – to invite patrons to share their expertise and self-advocacy (more so than simple opinions), especially when it comes to marginalised groups; to do in-depth research about the target group and their situatedness in society; and to use one’s professional librarian expertise in reflective and critical practice. – A thorough discussion of the ‘real patron needs’ concept however calls for another study.

Method

This study is based in qualitative research. For the gathering of research material, I carried out 8 semi-structured interviews and sent out a qualitative questionnaire as a complimentary tool to gather data in a bigger quantity. The purpose of the latter was mainly to collect sufficient material to enable me to draw more overlapping conclusions and to identify patterns more confidently and accurately. The qualitative interviews on the other hand provided me with an invaluable depth and personal insights that contributed greatly to my overall impression of the SL topic in a Swedish context. I have gained sufficient answers to my interview questions within the time frame available, yet it is also to be said that it is difficult to summarise (interviewee) and understand (interviewer) years of work experience and complex work environment dynamics within a one-hour-long conversation. I do not wish to claim that I could possibly have a complete understanding of my interviewee's nuanced perspectives and entire experiences. It lies, however, in human nature and not least the constraints of a research project that a clear and non-contradictory entirety remains evasive, perhaps even to the experiencing subjects, the interviewees, themselves. We all have tried our best in the attempt to grasp something so complex as life and work experiences and interpersonal dynamics, and I remain cautious in the conclusions I draw from what has been shared with me in person, let alone in writing.

Disclaimers

Seeing as I operate within a Swedish context, all of the communication surrounding the material collection, as well as the interviews and questionnaires themselves, have been carried out in the Swedish language. The appendix will therefore be completely in Swedish, I will merely translate any direct quotations from my material into English¹² (this thereby also conveniently serves as a further layer of anonymisation).

I have not made use of any AI at all during and for this thesis. All text is written and edited by me; all material is manually processed by me. The only tool I have made use of is the cloud-based service *Sunet Survey* (see 'Questionnaires' below) in which I created my questionnaire and let the tool create the graphs presented in the appendix. The entirety of the rest of my work was done manually, including

¹² I am aware of the difficulties of translation and the risk to lose nuance as well as meaning. I regret if any Swedish phrasings were to have lost some of their shine in the translation, and have done my best to render the Swedish text content as well as possible.

translating and proofreading the language. I consider an AI-free work process to be integral to in-depth, ethical and critical work.

Selection

Interviews

The method selected by me lies in the qualitative and personal nature of the research objective – I was interested in obtaining personal elaborations on individual librarians' experiences of working and living with their job as an everyday reality. I have attempted to collect material that is both detailed and wide enough. Each of the interviews has been carried out in person in a private room on library premises to facilitate a natural conversation environment, a personal touch, privacy about the things discussed, and a sufficient lack of distractions. My selection criteria for the interviews were to cover the two main library types academic and public library, as well as differences in size and circumstance of library institutions. All interviews were carried out with librarians working in Southern Sweden, both to limit the scope geographically and to enable me to travel to meet each librarian in person.

Four of the interviews have been conducted with an academic librarian, and four with a public librarian. Amongst each of the four, I have attempted to select a library each that falls under the following criteria: big institution, small institution, well-funded institution, precarious institution/circumstances. These criteria can and do overlap naturally, and were sometimes difficult to ascertain, however I wanted to ensure as much as possible that each of these criteria, taken for each library type, is represented in at least one of the selected libraries, so as to gather information from libraries with different conditions and working opportunities. This would make comparisons in dynamic differences and similarities even more interesting, and at least attempt to prevent that I end up excluding a whole group of libraries with certain circumstances – as is often the fate of small countryside libraries for example (Sánchez-Pita & Cabezas-Clavijo 2025). Moreover, this enabled me to encounter circumstances and libraries in which the librarianship situation was on the whole good and optimistic, as well as libraries with a rather dire situation and in desperate need of sustainable work practices. Seeing as part of my objective was to get an impression of the Swedish librarian situation in general, this was an appreciated and enriching part of my results.

Questionnaires

The qualitative questionnaires have been sent out to approximately 30 libraries outside of Southern Sweden, i.e. to libraries spread out through the entire rest of Sweden. I have taken care to send the email requests and questionnaire link to libraries I had not contacted before for interviews, as I wanted to avoid an overlap in individual institutions for my results, and to not repeatedly swamp busy librarians with my same requests for voluntary research participation. Whereas I sent reminder emails about my interview requests, the questionnaire turnout was so unexpectedly high (81 responses) that I sent no reminders there. The approximate number of 30 libraries is due to me sending some of these 30 request emails to general contact points of clustered libraries (to reach higher numbers of staff), rather than to their individual smaller branches, and because I asked the recipients to kindly spread my request through their institution and if so desired to other librarian contacts – I have therefore no information on how many more different libraries my request eventually reached. Neither do I know anything about who as an individual has replied to my questionnaires, as participation was completely anonymous (unlike with the interviews) and my questions were general enough as to not enable me to identify certain institutions (unless they were explicitly mentioned by the respondents), let alone from a national selection. Several respondents did explicitly include the region or even name of their library, which I have omitted from my results, however it allowed me to ascertain that the questionnaire responses cover a sufficiently wide-spread geographical ground for variety in results (instead of it being replies from many different staff members from only a few same libraries). Eventually, I received responses from 81 librarians from various different libraries.

The questionnaire questions were similar to my interview questions, though reformulated more concise in content and at times offering multiple choice answers. In general, most questions were based on free text answers, in which participants could type into a designated box. With this I intended to invite reflection and qualitative answers, seeing as my questions and research require responses about highly personal experiences. Whereas each interview took around 60 minutes, the questionnaire response time was timed to 20-40 minutes. I used the cloud-based and safety-approved tool *Sunet Survey*, as offered to me for free as a LU student, to create the survey and to later generate graphs from my multiple choice questions answers (see appendix #6), although I still went through all results personally, from which I created the graphs present in the results chapter. I processed the free-text replies manually without any further tools. I have attempted to send out requests to an equal amount of public and academic

libraries, similar as to my interviews. More public than academic librarians have eventually replied to the questionnaire (see results chapter); however enough have replied from both types to facilitate pattern analysis, and the amount of public librarian perspectives can furthermore be taken as a complementary counter-pole to SL's hitherto sole academic-librarian focus.

Selection considerations

The hitherto available research on slow librarianship is heavy on academic libraries, I see however no reason as to why one should exclude public libraries from this conversation. The two library types have very different circumstances, realities and target groups, which contributes significantly to the differences in and reasons for their perceived levels of stress at work. I find these differences to be enriching and of interest in looking at slow librarianship mechanisms, needs and practices. Moreover, both library types nevertheless have major similarities in their task, role, work and realities. They are both libraries at the end of the day, and a potential implication of public librarians not suffering from high stress levels or not being in need of slow librarianship practices is misguided. Perhaps neoliberal influence tends to be higher or more visible at universities, which is why much of previous literature has been written on this topic. Public libraries are however not exempt from societal influences and neoliberal constraints, and there are many overlapping similarities in the reasons for why their work is made unsustainable for both librarian types.

I have decided against including school libraries (or other, less prominent library types) in my research, for the reason that school libraries fall under different legal and contextual circumstances in Sweden, and have very specific challenges and conditions which I feel demand their own, separate, in-depth research. I do however absolutely see a relevance of analysing SL in the school librarian context, and believe this could be a next step in expanding the SL conversation at all libraries.

I have considered whether to also interview library directors and others who are hierarchically above the ordinary librarians, in order to take up the working conditions of the librarians working 'on the floor' with their leaders. In that case I would have asked them how important they deem sustainable and value-centred librarianship compared to other outside pressures on the library; how much they take it into consideration in their management of the institution and its workers; and in how far they view the concept of slow librarianship itself as a meaningful,

important and enriching one to be encouraged and facilitated. This is worthwhile investigating and equally makes up a fruitful ground for further research. For this thesis however, I have decided not to include them and to only focus on ordinary, employed librarians. My reason for this is that I aim to highlight the ‘on the floor’ experience of librarians and their perception of and decisions around their work, as possible within the frames they are given ‘from above’ at their institution and that their specific library conditions permit. This shines a light on the actual reality of librarianship at the moment, and further serves to highlight the creativity and effort librarians (need to) employ to negotiate slow librarianship ideas and translate these into their everyday work life. Moreover, instead of simply asking, why do the working and employment conditions of librarians not look so-and-so? This approach thus rather opens up for the question of: how do we, as librarians, work with the circumstances we are given, and in the most sustainable, human-centred manner?

Material analysis

I have considered whether to make use of thematic analysis in my work, and while there are themes and parallels in my results that could suggest my use of thematic analysis as a method, I have nevertheless decided against applying it. This is because the aim of my result analysis has not been to identify overarching themes, as is a central objective of thematic analysis (Ahmed et al. 2025, p. 1), and I have therefore not encoded the material to that end either. The themes of sustainable practices, working environment strengths and negatives, had already been identified prior to my survey and investigative work, and I have been looking for detailed examples or proof of it. Neither does it make sense for my work to present codes and themes as a result (Naeem et al. 2023), as I am looking from the opposite direction and for the micro-level aspects that make up codes in general. In my focus on SL, I do not wish to present e.g. “patron work” as a conclusion, but instead e.g. “librarian does not do one-shot sessions”, i.e. examples of concrete patron work, especially as I am interested in which type of sustainable practices Swedish librarians make use of. This makes for extensive lists in my results section, together with some overarching themes or codes, yet stands in parallel to the micro-level aspects and concrete strategies identified and suggested by SL librarians for a SL practice. One of my aims is to relate my findings to these SL practices, which is why my results operate on both a general as well as a detailed level, and in already given themes. Overarching conclusions I draw are analytical conclusions rather than primarily thematic ones.

I have therefore deemed thematic analysis an unfitting method for my study and have sooner done a sort of close reading of my material results, in which I have separated and interpreted statements into the vague categories of: stress factors, complaints, positives, practices, challenges, further thoughts. I created codes (i.e. specific practices) within those categories, and recorded the frequency of librarians mentioning something falling within that specific code, so as to obtain an impression which codes made up shared and frequent experiences, and with which prevalence. I thereby obtained a long list of codes for each category, as I was interested in recording separate practices as codes, in order to be able to present these practices in my findings which is what I do in the results chapter. I moreover have drawn overarching conclusions from these smaller codes, both to identify patterns and to gather an impression of the Swedish librarianship situation which I was interested in. These processes can seem parallel to thematic analysis, yet do not adhere to TA as a method and in some points even contradict it (as explained above).

The collecting as well as processing of my material was thus done completely manually and by me, without the use of further tools or AI, as I have seen this to be integral to my acquainting myself with the material and understanding it. It thereby also turned out to be a slow, in the literal and qualitative/sustainable sense, working process, in which I have sat closely with individual librarian experiences and personal opinions and insights. It is regretful that I cannot make use of all the nuances in the material within the limits of this thesis. The results in the next main chapter are therefore chiefly based in observational conclusions and numerical summaries, rather than that they primarily analyse extensive lists of individual librarian practices beyond the ones featured. This however permits me to present a helpful wide-encompassing impression and not least to increase the anonymity of my survey participants.

Risks

Seeing as my material is of qualitative nature and derived from conversations and personal experiences, this leaves a risk of my misinterpretation of respondents' meaning. Sometimes, answers were more general, and I have deducted a tendency towards a certain category in my conclusions. This is a pitfall of quantitative measuring – while my results remain qualitative, I have a few clear categories (which featured concretely in my questionnaire, mostly as multiple choice questions for that reason) which I deemed enriching for my results and which therefore require occasional interpretation in the absence of a clear answer. This

concerns mostly questions on perceived levels of time pressure and stress, overall satisfaction, and the library's financial situation (which not all respondents could give an answer to). I have tried to interpret in such manner as little as possible and only where an overall tendency is of interest to identify a central pattern.

Ethics

Ethical considerations are central to my research and inform my approach and work throughout. I have encoded interview respondents, anonymised questionnaire respondents, and pseudonymised all results and personal information so as to abide by GDPR law and in order to prevent the leaking of personal information of respondents beyond my research process. All interview recordings, notes, transcriptions, and questionnaire responses will be deleted after the completion of my thesis. The material was stored locally and with encrypted access. I have decided against using any type of AI throughout my entire working process so as to have more insight into and control over the data's processing and safety aspects. All material was thus transcribed and processed manually by me. I began each of my material collections by obtaining the (withdrawable) consent of the respondent. The need for collecting the material at hand in order to reach the requirements for graduating from my master's programme was approved by my supervisor prior to any collection of data and contacting of the respondents. I have ensured to handle all information shared with me with careful consideration and I continuously reflect on my own bias as a researcher. No one interviewed shall be harmed by my work results and processes. The aim of this thesis is to portray patterns of librarian practices and working conditions; to highlight librarians' experience and their perception of their work environment, possibilities and circumstances, without highlighting or identifying single persons. Although I cannot fully guarantee no potential recognition of especially interviewed librarians by e.g. close co-workers, I have taken several anonymising precautions against a possible recognition of specific libraries or librarians.

In the next chapter, I present my research results, both generally and divided by library type, which yields some notable nuances.

Results and analysis

In my work I have focused on both positives and negatives of Swedish librarian work reality. I have attempted to discover how satisfied Swedish librarians seem on the whole in their job and at their respective institutions; what makes their work sustainable, enriching, and fun; what makes their work difficult and them dread coming to work. I have asked librarians about their work environment (arbetsmiljö) and library circumstances, struggles and strengths. I have asked them about psychosocial aspects, personal frustrations and visions. I have asked how they see Swedish librarianship on the whole, how they reflect on their work practices, how much they think about or use socially sustainable practices, and what obstacles they encounter in carrying out their work well and with quality. In this I have attempted to both obtain an overview over Swedish librarian work reality and circle in the topic of slow librarianship as it can be transferred onto or interpreted within the given context. In the following, I present general circumstance findings; then interview results and questionnaire results with public and academic librarian results each; and lastly overarching patterns present in the entirety of the material with compiled lists of concrete practices.

Swedish librarian reality

General librarian circumstances

On the whole, Swedish librarians have a relative freedom in their work. Practically all respondents said they are free in how they choose to structure their work during the week and sometimes even what they work with, usually only restricted by set information desk shifts, events, deadlines, or set recurring meetings, the restriction levels of which varied from librarian to librarian. The many librarians who commented on this all said that this contributed to their work satisfaction, lower levels of stress, higher levels of perceived autonomy and being able to adjust to private life circumstances. SL theory also maintains that this lays the groundwork for being able to more easily practice sustainable work.

A related yet separate aspect is the amount of directives and suggestions librarians receive respectively – here feedback varied, yet the consensus was that different librarians have different needs as individual people. Some librarians thrive under high structural and decision freedom, some need clearer and more directives from their leaders in order to be able to work without problems. One librarian questionnaire respondent suggested for instance that leaders communicate an expectation of time spent on a specific task with each allocated task as a guideline

for their working librarians, which could be one helpful implementation. A lack of directives was in general perceived as stressful and detrimental. The conclusion here is to either consider the individual worker – as SL maintains – and to adjust to their needs as a director, or to direct all librarians the same minimum and clear amount so that the librarians with the highest directive needs can also thrive. In this latter case, librarians who prefer less directives would have to adjust, as theirs is a wish rather than a need. This falls under practices of inclusion and neurodivergent-friendly work environments which should be a priority in work place management (Arbetsmiljöverket 2026). The exact circumstances and best practices will vary from library to library, depending on the library’s role, tasks, staff, target audience and activities.

Considering the individual library

The libraries from which I interviewed librarians were, as mentioned in the method chapter, chosen according to different criteria in order to ensure perspectives from different circumstances. Amongst my interview material are therefore results from four academic and four public libraries, and from smaller as well as bigger libraries for each library type, with different levels of financing and communal circumstances.

Public librarians	work experience as librarian	library institution size
respondent A	21+ years	small-medium
respondent B	5-10 years	small-medium
respondent C	5-10 years	big
respondent D	21+ years	medium
Academic librarians		
respondent E	5-10 years	big
respondent F	21+ years	small

respondent G	21+ years	medium
respondent H	11-20 years	medium

Figure 1. Table over the interview respondents and their backgrounds¹³.

The interviewees were chosen from libraries in southern Sweden, whereas questionnaire respondents were anonymous, from various libraries spread out nationally beyond the south of Sweden. The questionnaires also cover both library types and have more results from medium or bigger libraries as well as from public libraries, yet on the whole also from libraries with varying circumstances, according to the respondents' descriptions.

One of the main general findings from both the interviews and questionnaires based on these selection criteria is that the institution size does not necessarily impact levels of work reality satisfaction, as the contributing factors to librarian workplace satisfaction are influenced by a myriad of circumstances. The most prominent satisfaction-determining circumstance seemed to be workplace culture and levels of neoliberalism and new public management (NPM), as these directly influence institutional priorities. It further became clear that all libraries have highly individual circumstances and needs, and that each library is impacted by the combination of these individual circumstances. In those, patterns can be found that add to and take from workplace quality regardless of institution. I will present those patterns later on in this chapter. On the whole, however, an individual look at the individual library is necessary in order to create a healthy workplace and supportive librarian conditions for the individual library in question. Simply tackling one or several of the pattern points will not guarantee an automatic improvement, as so much stands in interdependence with the remaining individual circumstances, and a generally sustainable practice can only be achieved by considering the entirety: individual details and the library as a holistic and unique organisation, in each specific case.

¹³ The library institution size I found difficult to categorize in this table, as criteria overlap. I have made an approximate deduction here based on staff member quantity; size of the building, rooms, and amount of shelves/books; how established the overarching institution is (e.g. the university); and size / inhabitant amount of the surrounding city or district the library is responsible for. Seeing as I found my interview respondents through criteria of library size and circumstance, I initially chose according to size impression – some of the libraries then turned out to be more medium sized than small in comparison to others and once their responsibility area was taken into account. Main branches moreover had more capacity to respond and take in interviewers than their small side branches, it seems. This could open up for the potential of more research exclusively at the smallest existing libraries. I am, however, confident in having overall obtained impressions from libraries with circumstances that vary across the board.

This suggests that the responsibility and power lies mostly with the people working at and with the specific library – most of all directors, also collaboration partners, politicians and the community, and not least librarians. This is a complex situation that many of the people working at libraries do their best to navigate, and I do not intend to devalue anyone's hard work with any of my following criticisms. I have encountered much optimism, dedication and joy, as well as critique and frustration in my material, and on the whole, the majority of the here asked librarians are generally satisfied with and happy in their job (see appendix #6). As was also repeatedly mentioned by respondents, libraries are deeply qualitative and sustainable in their idea and essence. The issue lies in moments and circumstances where that is obstructed and inhibited, and where librarians are kept from carrying out their (qualitative) work. Equally, there is evidently a presence of neoliberal culture impacting librarian work and work environment satisfaction that is stronger at some institutions than others. I will expand on this, concrete examples as well as patterns in the following sections.

Interview results

Public libraries

Two of the librarians interviewed had a work experience at libraries of 5-10 years, two had more than 21 years of experience as librarians. Only one out of the four public librarians seemed on the whole satisfied in their job reality. All four librarians reported at least some shortage of staff and especially of substitutes (vikarier), which significantly contributes to their perceived stress and time constriction levels, as well as the quality of service they are able to give their patrons. One reported not having enough time to carry out basic librarian tasks on a daily basis. Three reported that time pressure goes in phases, with both fast-paced and calmer periods. High personal time management skills and stress tolerance impacted one librarian's job stress experience significantly to the better, yet that person has also ended up having an unofficial spokesperson role on behalf of co-workers, and notices the negative consequences of that in salary development. Two librarians further mentioned clearly insufficient funds.

Two of the four librarians were exceedingly frustrated with neoliberal thinking and pressures from communal politicians and therefore their library directors, which also manifests in a library organisation that structurally deprioritises and obstructs qualitative work. Respondent C shared, "I do not think there is any longterm perspective at all in our organisation. It is about putting out fires all the time or about joining trends." Similarly, respondent D emphasised: "We want a lot

as a library, so we need a director who puts their foot down and says no to things, not one who says yes to everything. That is of vital importance.” Consequences of neoliberal norms spilling over from society create frustrations among many librarians, and as respondent B phrased it:

I wish for a bigger trust in that we as librarians know what we are doing. [I also wish for] concrete objectives in general actually To see concrete needs and follow up on those directly, instead of booking in a workshop and try and come up with [some objectives] all day long.

Respondent C described how the problem lies at a deeper socialisation level and is also present in library anxieties about not being considered important enough as an institution:

One can become afraid and not trust one's own role and competence [both as a librarian and library director]. I think it is more about fear rather than unwillingness. And that is a shame. ... We have to stop with this wish to perform/produce (prester) ... , that is no sustainable organisation in the long run. To remain in traditional librarian work is no bad thing: we adapt anyway. But there is no need to constantly turn everything on its head, that results in nothing, it simply leads to no one knowing anymore what we are actually there for. Libraries are so scared of being unmodern, and why can we not accept that we are no company? We do what we do and we do it well.

They (C) moreover maintained that people's trust in libraries is proven and that librarians should worry less about that, and more about ensuring qualitative services:

We cannot think that we are some sort of conveyor belt organisation, which can easily happen. It is also a societal influence, that one has difficulties letting people wait or take their rightful time. ... It creeps into the organisation and that is a shame. If there is a place which should be calm and without time pressure it should be the library. And we staff members also have to feel and believe that ourselves. ... We cannot lose [people's] trust [in the library as an institution] by being stressful and fast-paced and becoming like any other capitalist organisation out there.

This requires a rethinking, as well as an active slowing-down impulse from the side of librarians, especially in their meeting with similarly rushed patrons. In this lies librarians' power as understood by practice and institutional theory – reforming norms through certain practice adoptions and rejections. It also

connects to the literally slow aspect of SL, where sometimes, literally slowing down is one of the solutions.

The connotation of *exclusive* literal slowness however that the term SL calls up made several librarians react, among them respondent A:

Just in our context [of the library] I think the term ['slow' librarianship] is unfortunate because there are so many prejudices about that we [librarians] work slowly and that we are not doing anything when the library is closed. Many have the idea that it is calm in libraries, when that is just not the case. ... I encounter the same prejudices now as I did 30 years ago. So I am genuinely provoked when people think this is a relaxed job. But I understand that the term [SL] is also a response to the unbelievably fast-paced society we live in.

This could indeed be criticised – that the SL term is not immediately clear in its meaning, and often suggests misleading intentions at one's first encounter with it. Where its inspiration, the slow food concept, might perhaps be more intuitively understood (especially in a world of 'fast food'), slow librarianship raises questions and old connotations of the librarian profession as calm and uneventful work. What is a slow librarianship supposed to be? Even (stressed) librarians have trouble immediately recognising its purpose. If SL is mostly relevant to practising librarians and their conversations about their own profession's philosophies, this might be less of an issue, as it takes one sentence to briefly expand on SL's meaning as an introduction to a longer conversation. Taken out of context however, slow librarianship is not immediately clear to its first-time recipients and can be confusing or misleading. There is a tension here, as it is perhaps too late or not the best and most necessary way forward to alter the 'slow' part of the name (see alternatives in the introduction chapter). The tension exists – and perhaps invites questions that can turn it into productive curiosity and a communal learning and conversation experience instead (which are all impulses a SL practice encourages).

The fact that SL is more about sustainable librarianship and a call for a scaling down, as much as a consciously slowing down, stands in parallel to what Swedish librarians already perceive the need for themselves. Respondent D suggests that

We as the public library are now supposed to be for everyone and that can easily become a challenge and too much. Maybe we should have more public libraries that split priorities between themselves; that we do not all attempt to do everything for everyone, as that will not result in being anything for anyone.

The task of the library, especially the Swedish public library, is a giant one, and needs to be navigated and mediated consciously and care-fully. All librarians mention the importance of scaling down if necessary and choosing the right priorities, where people, rather than statistics, stand at the centre.

Social sustainability in librarianship further carries manifold roles, aspects, and responsibilities. The library is a place that cannot be taken out of its human context and needs. Its value cannot be measured in numbers:

We have the visitor count statistics – but how many of those that come to a big children’s event do we really reach? So now I feel more that if ... two young people come back [after an event] and I have managed to build a relationship with them, then I am satisfied. We are important adults ... for very many here. It means something to many that we remain [in this district] over the years. We are enmeshed in people’s lives, like teachers at school. This is no anonymous place and we have a lot of regulars.

Respondent D

It becomes clear from the results that the role of the librarian indeed goes beyond that of a performing worker in a productive organisation; it is humane, enmeshed, social, personal, important, immeasurable, and deeply embedded and needed in its communal context. It demands care as a professional aspect and, like a feminist ethics of care, exposes our human interdependence and need of each other. Such SL values are inextricable from a qualitative librarianship, also as the interviewed Swedish librarians understand qualitative librarianship and their own role as librarians.

All interviewed librarians seemed to be dedicated librarians who actively try their best on a daily basis to maintain qualitative library work (*sköta en bra verksamhet*), and are frustrated with unnecessary and significantly impacting obstacles. Respondent A described how the circumstances often work against them being able to carry out truly qualitative work:

I think that we [librarians] act both very thoughtfully many times and at the same time we fall short because we do not manage to do everything and cannot evaluate and reflect afterwards in a qualitative way. We need to act a lot in the moment. It is a very splintered (*spretigt*) job. But we truly try to do the best we can with the resources we have. But I think that most people want to do a good job [not just librarians].

Recurring obstacles to sustainable and qualitative work, apart from a lack of quality-focused leadership, were recurring problems with IT systems in the library, having no one else to deal with non-librarian tasks (such as IT, printing, help filling in documents), and solving escalating conflicts between patrons instead of carrying out (traditional) librarian tasks. Only one of the librarians had low levels of frustration despite a challenging library situation; this library seemed to work according to sustainable practices in many patron-focused aspects, though not so much in general staff working environment quality; while this librarian's stress levels were decreased by them having longterm work experience, feeling secure in their role, and having clear responsibilities and boundaries.

The biggest criticisms lay in not having a clear role as a librarian, not having clear priorities as a library, having library directors or middle managers that do not set boundaries and clear objectives for staff or the organisation, and being caught up in trying to do and be too much as a library with the result of not being enough for any of the target groups.

Academic libraries

One of the academic librarians interviewed had 5-10 years of librarian experience, one had 11-20 years, and two had more than 21 years of experience. Two reported staff shortage. Two said that time pressure goes in phases, one experiences clear and constant time pressure, and one does not experience any time pressure. Three out of four academic librarians were generally satisfied in their work reality, which is the exact opposite of the public librarians. Three commented on library budget, one librarian describing the library's budget to be good and sufficient, two describing it as average and relatively sufficient. All four described the academic library to be a more protected and less overstimulating work environment than the public library: "It is more difficult to deal with people than to deal with books", said respondent G. Some of the academic librarians, depending on their roles, work within an institution context that has long communication pathways and is slow to change because of an abundance of involved parties which are impacted by every decision. This can create frustration, yet also means that their working conditions tend to be more stable.

One academic librarian was dissatisfied with their work reality, which is due to too many tasks and responsibilities, and with too little staff to handle them. They perceive the lack of a Swedish librarian system centralisation compared with other Nordic countries as detrimental and would wish for more centralised resources,

instead of every individual library having to create those resources anew for themselves. They raise the need for task delegation from librarians to external resources, such as creating permanent positions for employees working solely with UX or internal organisation communication. They experience a lack in visible and longterm reliable trade union (facklig) representation, and a frustrating deprioritisation of their branch in comparison to connected branches. They critique a lack of clear responsibility boundaries for the library as a whole, as well as a lack of the sensible reevaluation and change of old practices which are unadapted to budget cuts and (new) challenging circumstances.

All four librarians considered that libraries tend to take on too much responsibility and too many tasks, and emphasized the need for saying no and setting boundaries on both an organisational and individual level.

It is important that you contribute as a library, that we go into [any] situation as a library, instead of that one simply joins all sorts of projects as a library which are not actually library projects. You contribute with who you are, either as a person or as an organisation. If you are not enough to cover the need, then you should accept that you cannot do everything

Respondent G

One pointed out that the organisational matrix structure so common at universities easily creates stress because it results in countless and constant meetings, it becomes unclear who has an overview, and unclearly defined individual tasks can become neglected or take a long time to be allocated to a responsible group. They also mentioned the norm nowadays of having to prove your value and exceptional contribution as a worker in order to receive a salary raise, instead of time worked at the institution being enough for an automatic raise, as it used to be the case before. This creates both pressure at the workplace, even more so for people struggling with normative performance, e.g. due to a disability (see background chapter), and is also a feature of neoliberal norm structures. All four academic librarians mentioned that different departments have different stress levels and levels of sustainable practice capacity based in their particular circumstances, which circles back to the need for considering the individual library with its individual circumstances in (sustainable) strategic planning and work practice structure. All four librarians seem to work in a relatively reflected manner and regularly communicate clearly to colleagues, patrons, and managers about their capacity and library needs, advocating for longterm sustainable practices and sensible decisions. Such practices and decisions are part of what they consider to

be qualitative librarian work, which they strive for as librarians – thereby (unconsciously) acting in ways that fall under SL as a practice.

The interviewed academic librarians make reflective, qualitative decisions in different everyday ways. Respondent F mentioned how they and their colleagues “saw that we can take away different things that remain purely because of routine, and to keep our quality through working in a different way.” Respondent E summarised, “Of course there is always room for improvement, but I try to remind myself that it is not all bad. There is a lot of good, and I choose my battles, and if I want change, I really try to push for it.” Two librarians specifically brought up AI as an example of seemingly unreflective decisions from the university’s side. Respondent E criticised that AI services are acquired in an effort to not fall out of step with society without asking how useful these specific AI tools are in an academic context, and without considering ethical aspects, or how to use the tool post-acquisition. Respondent H further expanded,

With AI for instance there is this thing that learning processes should not exist or that you can skip over everything. That is a development that exists. ... And there is a lot of pushing around effectivisation in this way nowadays. But one has to be conscious around all that. There is a lot that is lost, also in the students’ work, otherwise. The invisible processes. The value that exists in that we do something ourselves. Everything does not become better only because it takes less time.

Both emphasised the need for making reflective, ethical and critical choices when it comes to such developments, instead of simply jumping on the trend without further consideration for consequences, risks, drawbacks, or for how to incorporate the new tool going forward. Reflective practice and taking the time for it is essential according to both SL and these librarians.

In such neoliberalism-influenced environments, quality becomes sacrificed for speed and perceived short-term efficiency. Traces of neoliberalism manifesting itself as relevant parts of librarianship questions are present in several contexts. Respondent F took that up:

SL is definitely interesting and unbelievably important, at the same time as it is a huge challenge. And I think that the challenge lies on several levels, it is not that easy, even if it is a lot about capitalism and the individualistic society, all those bits that contribute to quality and longterm sustainability being deprioritised and obstructed. ... [If the union has no active presence] then it [is] for example also a

lot more difficult for new librarians who want to have stability and need to navigate performance expectations. There we need to return to the collective!

This additional use of communal work to counter neoliberal pressures is also an emphasis in SL. It further suggests that Swedish librarians already (want to) make use of SL strategies to counter detrimental circumstances at the library. It seems that a librarian focus on quality leads to much that SL takes up, which points to the movement's well-founded and thought-through nature, as well as to Swedish librarian expertise and competence regarding the creation of a qualitative library.

Two academic librarians were particularly interested in SL as a concept and movement and had specific thoughts they shared about it. Respondent G emphasised that being an explicit SL librarian, as theorised by SL scholars, is voluntarily taking on a challenging and highly responsible role, which not every librarian might want or might be able to take on. Even from an introvert perspective for instance, showing up in such involved ways as SL writers advocate for can be more than one can manage at work. They (G) moreover expanded,

If there is to be a framework for [SL], it has to be present in all parts of the organisational chain and there has to be a common understanding of what [SL] is exactly. ... [SL as I understand it] is a lot about becoming secure [in yourself and your role as a librarian] in order to be available [for patrons]. If you are secure and calm, you know how much you can offer in meeting [with patrons]. It is really about being able to handle the [patron] meeting.

This is a keen insight. It also connects to thoughts and struggles librarians writing about SL share, as they explore their personal relation to their work and the question of SL's self-imposed activism¹⁴.

This is another of the movement's points that can be questioned, as becoming a slow librarian arguably equals becoming a social justice activist. Not everyone wants to fight such battles at work everyday, and by far not everyone wants to, can, or has to take on the responsibility and work of being an everyday activist. There is generally a line somewhere that is perhaps difficult to draw, between librarian role and values, and their overlapping with activist intentions or more so actions, especially in contemporary polarised political climates and with the

14 Interesting SL similarities are present in Amanda Oliver's aforementioned book *Overdue* (2022), where she writes critically and empathetically about her experiences working as a public librarian at a US-American library with challenging circumstances. Oliver reckons in depth with how to position oneself as a caring librarian and human individual in the face of such overwhelming social challenges.

library as an intended democratic institution and neutral meeting ground. Even without SL, many librarians use their power and work opportunities for promoting human rights and empathetical connection between citizens. Libraries have never been neutral, neither in their structures, collections, offered information, nor patron-supportive practices – even if they sometimes are positioned as such, or at least have some ambition to be regarding information accessibility (Kann-Rasmussen et al. 2026). Most librarians are conscious of this neutrality myth and the inherent bias in any and all library structures and services (ibid.) – this consciousness is arguably part of being a professional librarian. SL thereby perhaps extends and builds on this, rather than that it introduces an outrageous amount of activism into an otherwise meek role. Nevertheless, being a slow librarian demands additional efforts. It often requires the deep and honest personal work of extensive unlearning, rethinking, continuously learning and reflecting. It is a personal choice if one invites such efforts into one's (work) life, and those who decline to do so are not automatically worse or less qualitative librarians for it. Taking on an explicit SL responsibility, and working sustainably without aligning oneself (entirely or consciously) with the SL movement are still separate things. The goal is arguably more sustainability in librarianship, it does not have to be slow librarianship.

The chief criticisms (mainly regarding clear boundaries and priorities) brought forth by the public librarians apply likewise here in the academic library context. In reply to my question whether it is on the whole difficult for libraries in Sweden to work well and sustainably, respondent G said, “[No,] the conditions to have good and qualitative libraries exist. We have good possibilities in Sweden, but it is about using those resources in the right way.” On the whole, the interviewed academic librarians seemed however to have a more protected environment than the public librarians for carrying out their work as they deem it best.

Questionnaire results

A total of 82 responses came in from the questionnaire sent out to an approximate of 30 library contact emails, both academic and public libraries, with the request to kindly spread the survey link further to librarian colleagues. Amongst those 82, one response was left blank, apart from “not familiar with the concept of SL”, and is thus not counted. Amongst the remaining 81 responses from librarians, 29 academic librarians replied, 49 public librarians, and 3.5 school librarians¹⁵ (the .5

¹⁵ I do not have a specific section on school libraries in this thesis, because they are not part of my study, as the specific conditions of school libraries exceed the scope of this research. The responses from the 3.5 school librarians I partly included in my results, as much of what these

being a librarian who works both as a public and school librarian). Two of the librarians who responded said they are familiar with the concept of SL from before – one of which did not expand on that nor ever brought it up again in their remaining replies, the other one of which said they had recently heard of it from a colleague. This results in 79 out of 81 librarians not having been familiar with the concept of SL prior to them receiving my questionnaire. None of the librarians showing interest in my interview requests had previously heard of SL either.

It can therefore be deducted that a majority of Swedish librarians have not heard of the concept of ‘slow librarianship’ as a movement before. This is understandable seeing as it is a smaller research area that has so far mainly been written and talked about amongst American academic librarians. Many of the Swedish librarians however noted that they do think about and partake in practices related to or falling under the SL umbrella. The actual topics and concerns of SL are therefore long familiar and highly relevant to Swedish librarians. Equally, most of the Swedish librarians were open to the concept of SL and/or furthermore perceived a definite need for it, either at their specific library, or for Swedish libraries in general, at least as an enriching effort.

In total, most of the questionnaire respondents have a significant amount of work experience as librarians and therefore reported on perceptions they have amassed over the years and in a broader, more longterm context.

respondents said overlapped with the perspectives from the other librarians. One school librarian especially emphasised the need for SL in public libraries, where they called the job too split apart, there being an expectation for the librarian to know everything, and much which steals the librarian’s focus and time, resulting in the core librarian task being neglected. Some aspects and circumstances mentioned by the school librarians were specific to the Swedish school library situation and were therefore not included; this provides fruitful ground for a further study. I regret to have to deprioritise these few librarians’ responses in this way and have however in my results considered the overarching points they shared.

Respondents' working experience as a librarian in years

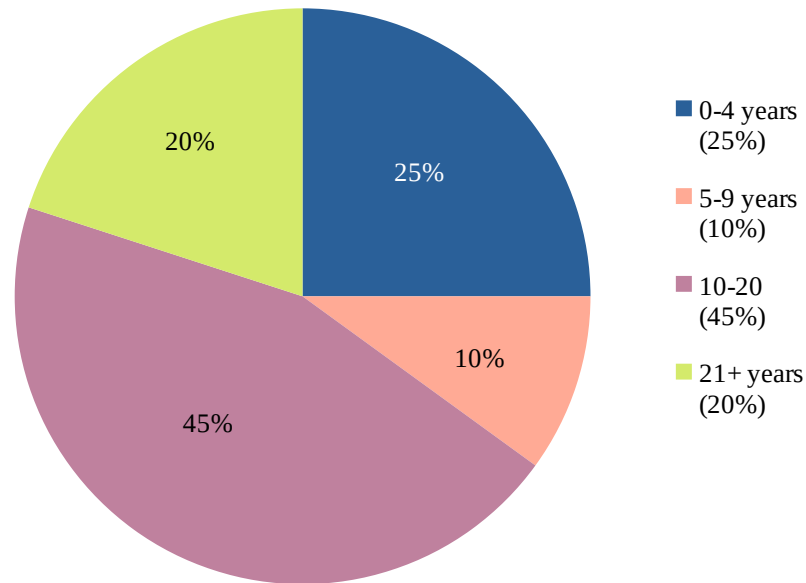


Figure 2. Chart over all questionnaire respondents' work experience in years.

In this chapter, I will feature separate graphs for public and for academic librarians' results each. Appendix #6 shows graphs of results from all librarians, as the questionnaire was the same for all library types and allowed for no distinction in result generation. The separation into library type (which was commented on in a text box instead of ticked in a box, to allow for individual variety and expansive comments in the same go) and the resulting response differences have therefore been done and analysed manually by me, and I will present differentiated graphs in this chapter, seeing as that separation yields some interesting nuances. The results in appendix #6 thus provide a more general picture of Swedish librarians undistinguished by library type and offer a different valuable overview.

Disclaimer and method reflections

Some of the numbers presented from the questionnaire results might not add up to the total number of respondents – this is because not everyone replied to each question, and because sometimes respondents ticked several options per one question at the same time, or were even encouraged to. I permitted this function in order to not restrain the registration of respondents' complex experiences, and because it can be difficult to summarise one's work and life experience in merely one simplified box or statement. With some questions, I moreover aimed for multiple replies. A few responses were contradictory which made interpretation difficult, and I usually chose one option that aligned most with what the respondent had answered throughout the entirety of the questionnaire. In the

sections where I present questions explicitly about SL as a concept and respondents' opinions on it, the result numbers are based in my interpretation of written text answers and are thereby not entirely reliable numerically. These SL results in percentages moreover do not add up to a total of 100%, because they are not in relation to one another, but always stand by themselves and regardless of each other. Meaning, if for instance ten out of thirty librarians use SL practices, it could simultaneously be that twenty five out of thirty approve of SL practices (not my actual results). What is of interest here is not the percentage total taken together, but the amount of librarians who align themselves with each of the specific statements.

A few respondents expressed their confusion at how to reply to my questions accurately, which is always a risk given questionnaire rigidity. The way I had compiled my questionnaire seemed however to work for the majority, which made for a majority of clear and consistent answers, and I have therefore not made note of any major shortcomings to learn from for potential future surveys. A divide into separate questionnaire forms for different library types could be something to consider depending on what one would like to achieve, as that would simplify a separate-by-type results analysis. In my case, the non-separation worked for my purposes and the additional manual labour required to separate the results moreover yielded a slow and rewarding familiarisation process with the material and its nuances.

Where possible, I give a concrete numerical amount (percentages rounded to full figures) of librarians who reported a specific circumstance. In some instances, however, it is impossible for me to give a percentage, rather than write "some" or "many" librarians. This is because a majority of my material had to be interpreted, as respondents phrased similar experiences differently and I derived overarching patterns from individual written texts. Much also repeatedly cropped up sprinkled throughout the material instead of being phrased concisely. Because my aim was to identify concrete patterns and practices, I further recorded all the different practices mentioned, without always recording precisely how many people had mentioned that practice because I considered that to be of no significant relevance. If something is included in my results presented here, that is because it was a recurring pattern, with a sufficient amount of librarians reporting it for it to become worthy of notice, even if I cannot name an exact amount of librarians. I would further argue that none of the practices or behaviours found in my results are uncommon amongst librarians as a profession, and they might be familiar to many, even if they occur with different frequency between different individuals.

In my analysis, I attempted to assess the extent of a slow librarianship practice in the librarian practices at hand, which proved however nigh impossible. To begin with, it was both a challenge and a shortcoming of the nature of the survey format to successfully mediate the slow librarianship concept and movement in so little space as an interview conversation and a questionnaire form. To more deeply understand the movement and perceive it as tangible, more extensive theoretical reading, time for reflection, and perhaps longer discussions among librarians can be necessary. To present it so shortly summarised as I had to do, especially in a questionnaire where no further questions from the respondents were possible, does not lay the best ground for a thorough understanding of how this concept relates to one's own existence as a librarian, especially the further removed one is from the concerns brought up by SL. For many librarians, SL seemed to strike a chord and resonate with situations they had already thought about or encountered frequently before in their own life, and they enthusiastically connected their experiences to it. Three librarians reported that SL gave a word to something they had been trying to articulate or had long been upset about. A majority were open for it without having considered it before. Yet for several others, the concept remained highly abstract and ungraspable; seemingly unrelated to their life reality or at best confusing, making a problem and a statement out of things that naturally are part of those librarians' work practice with no issues and second thought. In that context, SL could be perceived as irrelevant (for the Swedish library sector), as a superfluous ideology or another fancily phrased trend, with little connection to real life librarian concerns and realities. Out of the total 81, around 25% of librarians seemed sceptical of SL as a concept, and approximately 15% of librarians saw no need for SL as a concept or movement, at least at their library (which can also point to sustainable and good working conditions at those institutions). These figures are interpretationally unstable in themselves, which connects to my next obstacle with assessing SL levels in librarians' everyday practices.

Interpreting to which extent Swedish librarians unfamiliar with the SL concept work according to a SL practice is practically impossible. Just as the previous percentage of SL sceptics might change through librarians interacting and familiarising themselves more deeply with the movement, seeing how it can apply to their work life, and understanding the need for its formulation through different contexts and perspectives as well as their own, just as much might after this familiarisation the response of librarians change as to how much of a SL practice they apply in their work life. Identifying levels of a practice in individuals

unfamiliar or only briefly familiar with the concept is likewise faulty and misleading. A majority of librarians have voiced this hesitancy due to their unfamiliarity as well. Many librarians have however reported applying some practices that do fall under the SL umbrella. In registering these, the drawback arising here is that most librarians gave examples of sustainable practices they make use of that I prompted per way of explanation of SL. Other sustainable or SL practices not included in my prompts were seldom mentioned, though I am sure they exist, and thereby fall under the radar of this survey. Eventually, I chose to register whenever librarians reported making use of sustainable practices and whenever that passed a minimum threshold of several practices and regularly. With this, I intended to register an impression of frequency of sustainable practice among librarians and whether central practices put forward by SL are regularly applied by Swedish librarians. This is connected to questions about workplace circumstance (I asked e.g. about if librarians keep working after their workday is over, or if they take out their reading time), and much of my research about work environment and SL overlapped and intersected with each other. This resulted however in clear impressions and possible deductions, even if research on the unfamiliar SL concept is by nature vague. It also allowed me to, if not ascertain SL levels in Swedish librarians, then to assess tendencies of a sustainable practice presence, and not least to gather librarians' impressions of and thoughts on SL as an idea. In the remaining part of this subchapter, I summarise the concrete questionnaire results and deductions I was able to make.

Public libraries

Out of the 49 public librarians who responded, 35 said they work at a medium or bigger institution (with at least 10 employed librarians or more), whereas 14 work at a small library (less than 10 librarians). A number of 9 librarians work within a socio-economically vulnerable district, and 10 librarians work at a library that shares the building or rooms with other organisations (e.g. cultural, communal or stately services). Among those who commented on finances, 7 said they are well financed, 9 called their budget average (strained), and 14 complained of a significantly insufficient budget.

Many public librarians reported experiencing relevant time constraints in their daily work life.

Do you experience time pressure during your working hours?

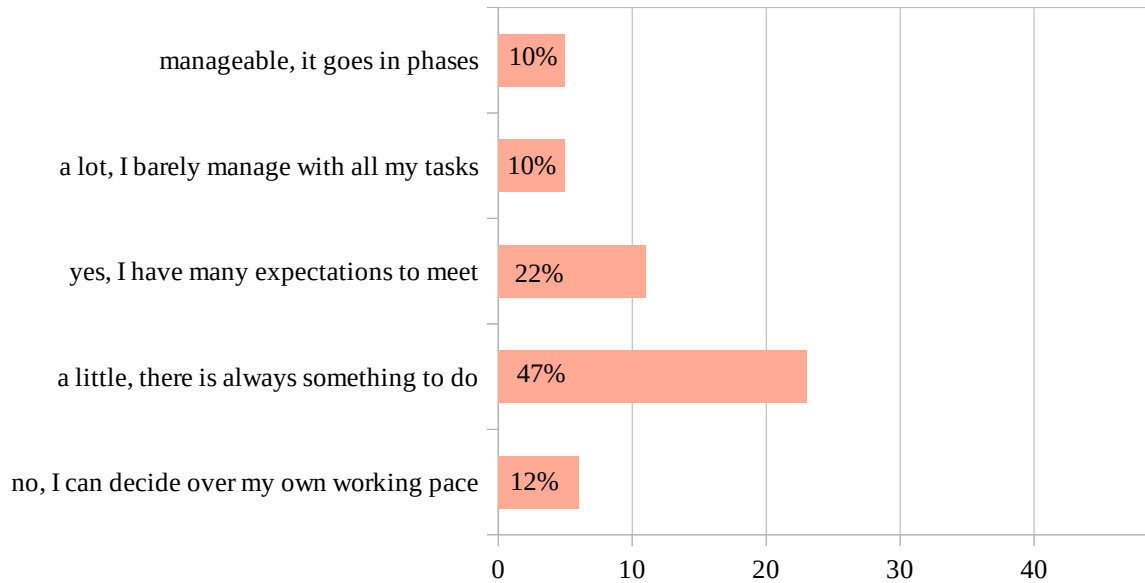


Figure 3. Chart over public librarians' experienced time pressure.

A majority of public librarians do not experience significantly detrimental stress levels at their jobs, though all of them do experience some stress. Out of the 49, 6 librarians reported mostly experiencing inner stress created by their own expectations, 3 highlighted experiencing stress mostly due to overstimulation (this could be included in some of the others' general answer, too), and 2 public librarians described themselves as having a higher stress tolerance than the average person/librarian.

How stressed do you feel at and with your job?

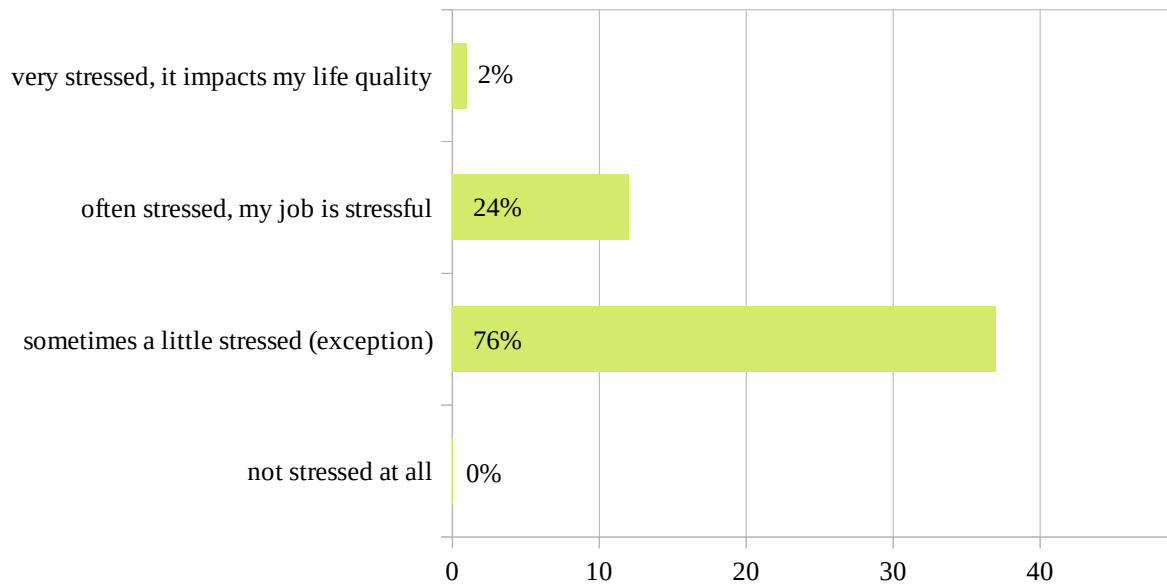


Figure 4. Chart over public librarians' experienced stress levels.

A majority of 57% of public librarians report being satisfied with their job and at their workplace.

How satisfied are you in general at your job?

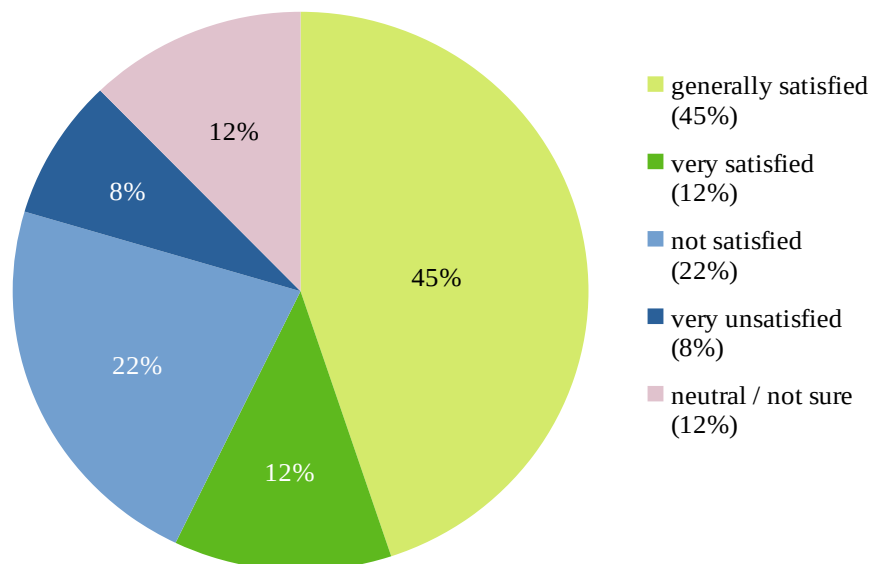


Figure 5. Chart over public librarians' general job satisfaction.

The overarching patterns in the results from the public librarian responses were that their stress levels are often rooted in overstimulation and in the challenges that come with working with the broad public. A key criticised point was staff and real patron needs not being taken notice of by leadership. A frequent strong point was the existence of a strong staff collegiality (often but not always, the more dire the working conditions are, the more the librarians support each other). The highest reported sustainability needs apart from more staffing were having more time for patrons, reflection and research or reading time.

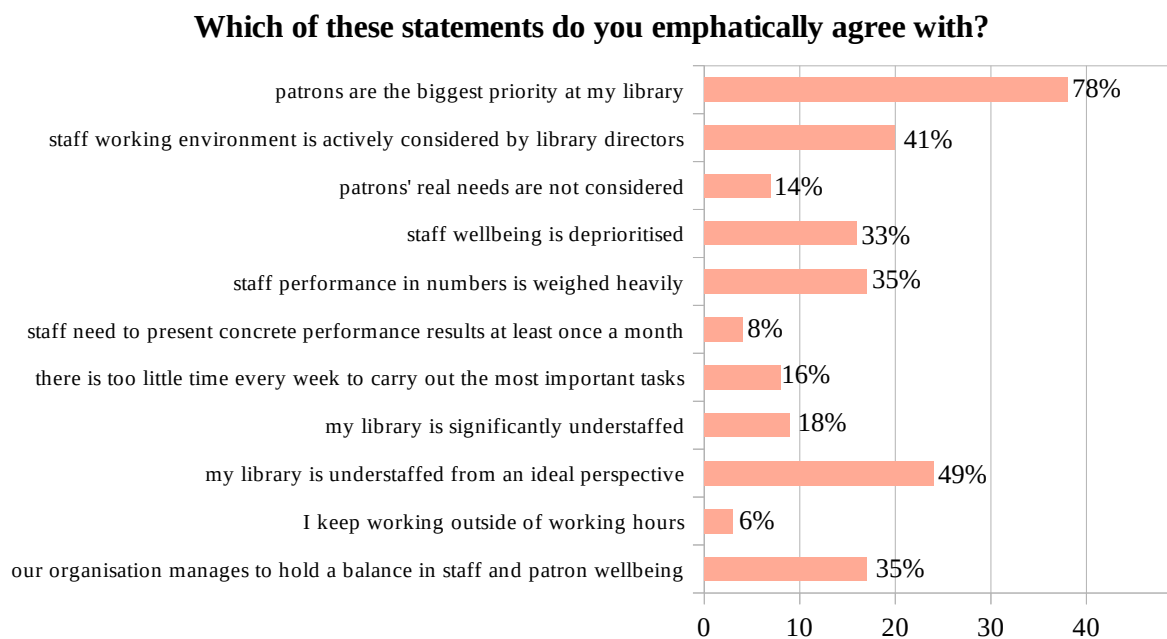


Figure 6. Chart over public librarians' perspectives on their work place library.

An overarching pattern seems to be that public libraries and librarians' work efforts centre around the library's patrons, even to the occasional detriment of the librarians.

Amongst the 49 public librarians, around 55% said they regularly apply sustainable practices at their workplace. However, up to 95% of the 49 librarians (also) miss sustainable practices personally at their job or see a need for SL and its practices in some central ways, meaning they have some serious concerns about a lack of longterm qualitative work circumstances at the library, and welcome SL as an enriching initiative or response to that. This means that public librarians miss being able to apply (more) sustainable practices, whether they already work sustainably to an extent or not. These SL-related numbers are as aforementioned counted by me from interpreting librarians' written text replies and are not based

in concrete reply numbers from multiple choice questions. One librarian wrote for instance, "There are few things that are as low-prioritised [in this library] as work environment and our core librarian work." Another one observed: "Certainly [I see a need for SL in Sweden]. I think that a whole lot of librarians suffer from a feeling of not being or doing enough. ... But we are only as many as we are." Looking at the criticisms public librarians raised (see following patterns subchapter), the figure of 55% points to that the librarians are otherwise kept from working sustainably, not that they would not do so or want to otherwise.

Regarding a SL-supportive environment, 29% assess their colleagues to be supportive of sustainable working practices, 22% report having a supportive director who is proactive about qualitative working conditions, and 20% complain of a director particularly uninterested in sustainable working conditions. These three numbers however do not point to clear conclusions, because they are again based in my interpretations as well as in librarians' guesses about their co staff members, and many librarians mention not having talked about work practice sustainability questions amongst each other before.

Looking specifically at the national picture (also interpreted numbers), 18% are not sure about whether Sweden in general has a need for SL or could not make such a general statement; 10% think the Swedish library situation is already good and has no need of SL, though it probably could not hurt to explore SL as a concept; 30% say it would definitely be enriching to introduce SL as a movement into the Swedish library sector; and 37% think Swedish libraries on the whole absolutely have a need of SL. This makes for a majority of 67-77%¹⁶ who see a relevance of discussing SL as a concept in a Swedish library context. What is also interesting is that even the librarians who do not see a SL need are nevertheless open for considering the concept.

Academic libraries

Out of the 29 academic librarians who replied to the questionnaire, 26 work at a medium or big institution (hereto I counted libraries with twenty or more employed librarians), whereas 3 work at a smaller university library. Regarding library finances (among those who could comment on it), 3 librarians said their library is well-funded, 12 called their budget average, and 8 said they have a significantly insufficient budget.

¹⁶ Counting the explicit SL-approving 30% + 37% (= 67%), and up to the addition of the 10% (= 77%) who said a SL conversation could not hurt.

Only 4 of the academic librarians replied in the positive to my question on if they do academic research – meaning traditional academic research is for various reasons not relevant to many Swedish librarians as part of their librarian work (this does not include the research (all) librarians do to stay on top of their role and area, or as part of their traditional library work). My question about research was motivated by existing literature on American academic librarians and the obstacles they encounter at their workplaces which keep them from being able to do research successfully and thereby disadvantage them against other university staff (see Mountz et al. 2015; and Nicholson 2019). Out of the four, one respondent said they do a little academic research but are met with unclear expectations around it from their workplace and have very little time for it amongst their other duties. One other said they do research themselves but are not expected to and thereby also do not receive support from their workplace around it. Another said they would like to do research but are not encouraged to it. The last one said they have a little room for research planned in by their leaders and that they derive much joy and knowledge from doing research. It also has to be said that it would require another study to thoroughly examine Swedish academic librarians' structural academic research ability and circumstances. It can further very well be that not all respondents interpreted the question and the term 'research' in the same manner, and that the results could thereby be misleading or incomplete here. As a first impression, it does however provide an interesting entry point and at the least suggests the conclusion that research is not prioritised as a librarian question at many Swedish academic libraries.

A minority of academic librarians experience significant or impacting time pressure while working.

Do you experience time pressure during your working hours?

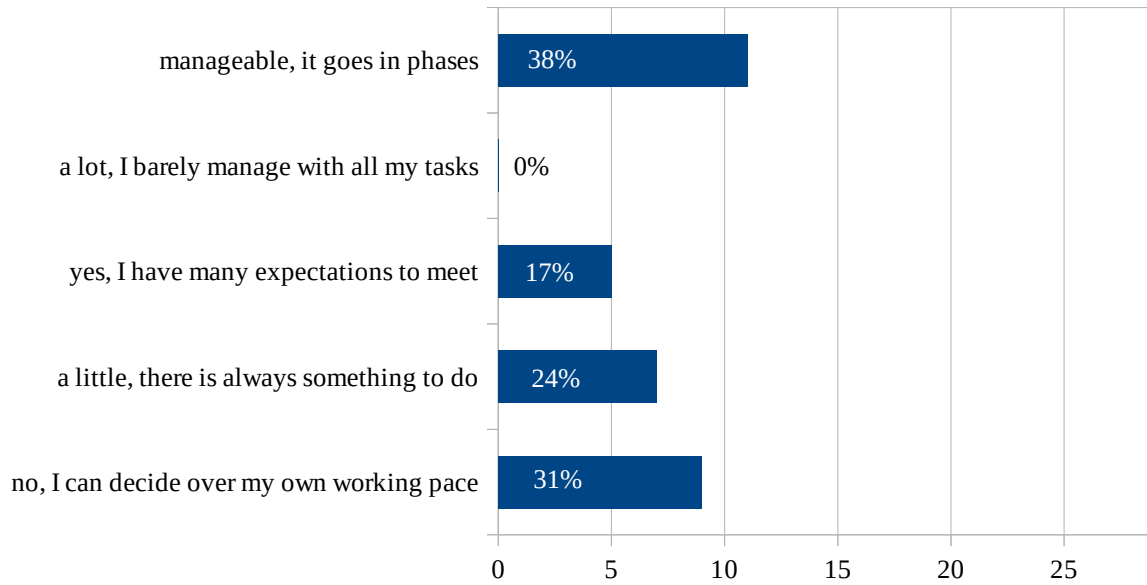


Figure 7. Chart over academic librarians' experienced time pressure.

Similarly, a majority of academic librarians do not suffer from serious stress at their job.

How stressed do you feel at and with your job?

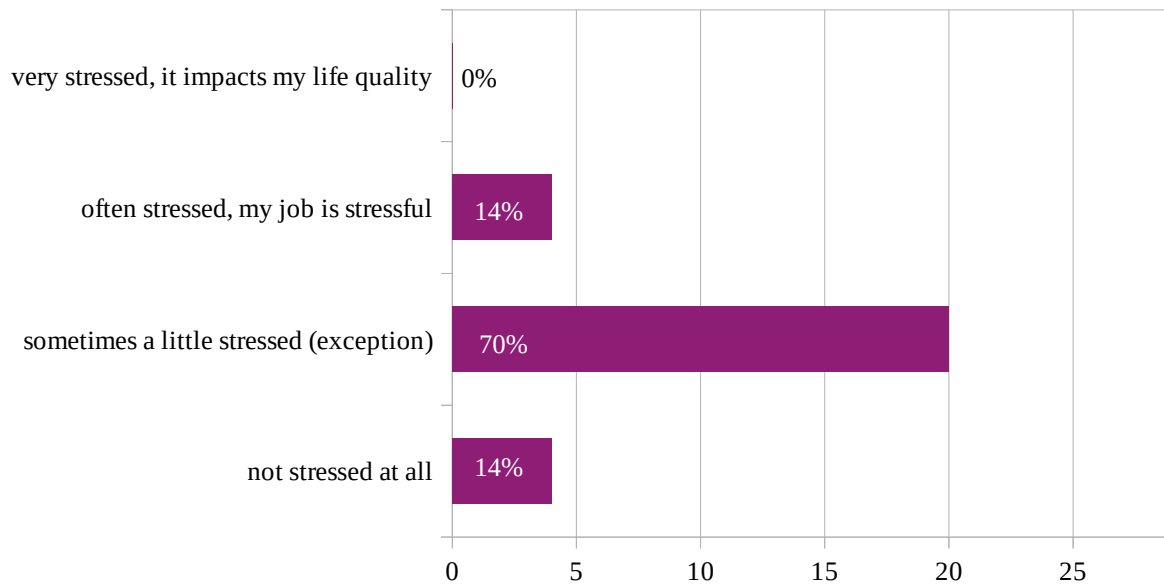


Figure 8. Chart over academic librarians' experienced stress levels.

A majority of 82% of academic librarians are on the whole satisfied with their workplace. The 4% in the following chart are one person each, and the one person who reported being “very unsatisfied” is primarily so because of a significantly detrimental physical working environment.

How satisfied are you in general at your job?

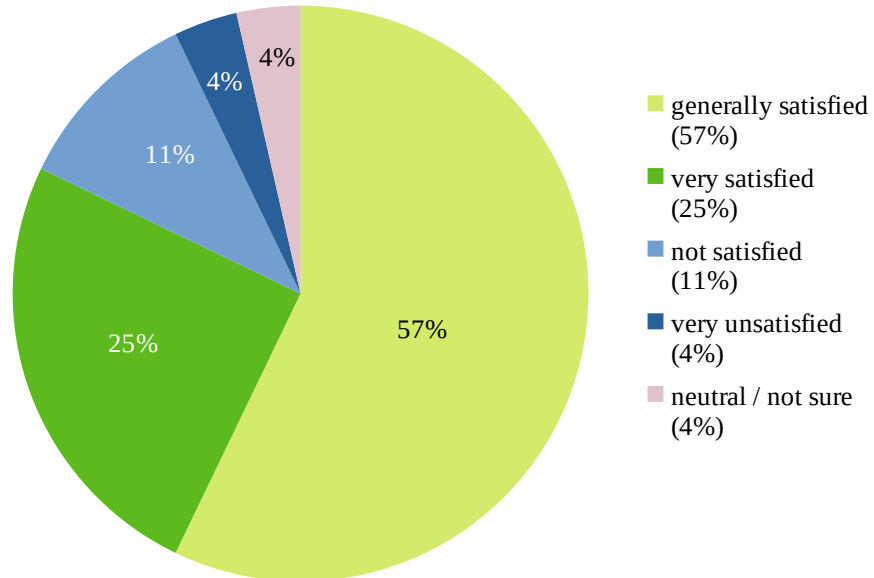


Figure 9. Chart over academic librarians' general job satisfaction.

Overarching patterns in academic librarian responses were that their higher stress levels are most often due to always having more to do and know, as well as in having unclear work boundaries of various kinds. A frequent key positive point reported here was having a supportive director and working environment. Neoliberal pressures at universities however also leave their trace at academic libraries – as one librarian phrased it: “Many leaders are infatuated with numbers and statistics, even though everyone knows that they do not show the right things and that you cannot measure what is really important.” Often mentioned was the need for more reflection and research time.

Which of these statements do you emphatically agree with?

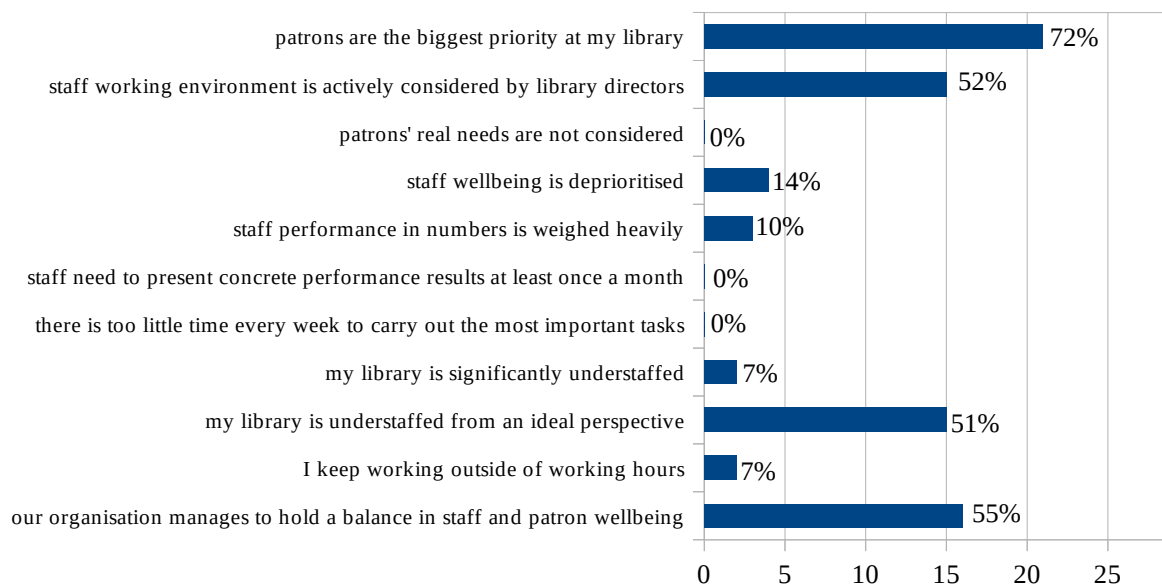


Figure 10. Chart over academic librarians' perspectives on their work place library.

The academic librarian results presented here (figure 10) show that understaffing is also a recurring issue, and that patrons are at the centre of most academic library organisations. It further becomes clear however that staff wellbeing seems to be a higher priority and reality more often than at the public libraries present in this research material.

Among the 29 academic librarians, 59% apply sustainable practices regularly (compared to 55% of public librarians) and more than half of those even do so extensively. Whereas 59% of the academic librarians are able to work sustainably, 31% out of the total 29 academic librarians miss sustainable practices or see a need for SL at their workplace (compared to the public librarian 95%). As one academic librarian put it, "Regardless of what you choose to call it, I absolutely see a need of giving the best and most comprehensive help possible to [patrons]. But for that to be possible, there has to be time, staff, and the right priorities." When it comes to support for sustainable work practices, 51% report that their colleagues are supportive of their qualitative work choices, 44% have an interested director involved in encouraging a sustainable working environment, and 10% report that their director is not interested in creating that environment. These support-measuring numbers are however again based in academic librarians' impressions or even speculations about their co-workers and directors, and all SL-related numbers here are based in my interpretations from written text replies.

librarian type	applying sustainable practices	missing sustainable practices
public (out of 49)	55%	95%
academic (out of 29)	59%	31%

Figure 11. Table over all questionnaire respondents' sustainable practice situation¹⁷.

The pool of academic librarians interviewed through the questionnaire is smaller than the one of public librarians and is moreover far from extensive, so generalising conclusions cannot really be made and it is not my intention to do so. Considering the contextual results however, the reported experiences do point to that academic librarians could be more often provided with the needed circumstances to be able to work sustainably than public librarians are. The differences in workplace satisfaction (82% satisfied academic librarians vs 57% satisfied public librarians) can also be said to indicate that tendency. This could be due to universities being more protected and standardised institutions, and due to the more narrow target group and its different, more specific needs that academic libraries have compared to public libraries, as well as fewer overstimulating environment factors. For a thorough exploration of reasons for these result differences, more research would however need to be conducted.

Asking about the library situation in Sweden in relation to a potential SL need (again interpreted numbers), 34% could not make such a generalising statement, 13% of the academic librarians are not sure either but think logically there must be a need for SL. In comparison, 17% consider there to be no need for SL because Swedish libraries have good circumstances and the Swedish system is already based in SL. One person moreover said that (Swedish) libraries do not work according to neoliberal structures because that is an inherent contradiction to librarian work (the latter of which is an argument of SL, yet with the conviction that neoliberalism does have a presence in the library sphere – hence the SL movement). One other person said, Swedish libraries are indeed in a good position, yet that this might change in the near future.

¹⁷ These numbers are, as aforementioned, based in my own interpretations of respondents' written text answers and are therefore to be considered with caution. They do not equal the higher certainty of the percentages drawn from the multiple-choice replies. It is perhaps best to take them as indicators of tendency rather than as concretely presentable facts. But then the qualitative nature of this study, with results based in individual perceptions and experiences, and the difficulty for respondents to assign their complex experiences to boxes, as well as for all involved parties to understand each other's meaning, also points away from a factual reliability of all numerical results. This, perhaps, connects anecdotally to the unstability of neoliberal measurement culture (mätbarhetskultur).

In contrasting parallel, 28% consider the Swedish system to be based in SL yet that it needs more of the SL conversation for that system to be upheld and continue under these circumstances, and 31% think that the Swedish library sector does have a clear need of a SL movement (compared to 37-67% of public librarians¹⁸). The public/academic numeric comparison here is also nuanced because fewer academic librarians see a need for SL in total, yet there is more of a yes/no divide among the academic librarians; whereas public librarians showed on the whole more interest and enthusiasm for SL, yet there are nuances in how enthusiastically public librarians said 'yes' to introducing the SL movement at Swedish libraries.

What further stands out in these numbers (of both library types) is that more librarians perceive a clear and graspable need for SL at their individual library than that they feel confident making sweeping statements about the national situation, which is understandable. Seeing as a majority of the circumstances worsening public librarians' working conditions (see following patterns subchapter) are more inherent to the public library as a place than the more individual organisational complaints academic librarians tend to have (e.g. the public library as a societal third space, compared to unbalanced task delegation at one university library), this could explain public librarians' significantly higher percentage of seeing a need for SL in all Swedish (public) libraries.

Librarians from both types are moreover both enthusiastic about SL as a concept and cautious in that enthusiasm, especially when it comes to talking about applying it on the big scale. Three of them shared the following thoughts:

I think [SL] is a nice thought, but cannot see how this would work in the practical world. Society develops fast and libraries have to keep up with that, otherwise we would not be able to give our patrons the support that they need. Many library organisations have staff shortage, and a lot of weight is placed on librarians there, so I would rather see more colleagues as a solution to the stress.

//

Yes [I see a need for SL in the library sector]. I think there is pressure in all of Sweden that the amount of library activities are expected to go up every year, at the same time as staff and expenses are being cut. This does not create good

18 These comparative numbers of 37-67% of public librarians are based in the numbers of 37% of public librarians seeing a pressing SL need, and (+)30% (= 67%) of public librarians saying it would (definitely) be enriching to introduce the SL movement. It communicates the caution of what one counts towards the amount of librarians thinking there is a clear need for SL.

library activities, and no good work environment either. I think SL is a good idea, but I believe it will be difficult to convince people of it.

//

Everything you list [with SL practices] would be part of a well-functioning workplace that protects its organisation's development. Unfortunately, reality does not look like that, and that depends a lot on whether leadership prioritises correctly.

These worries mention both concrete needs that demand clear solutions (employment scarcity, leadership methods), as well as the more challenging topic of SL requiring a rethinking process amongst real people and society on a broader scale. As another librarian shared, "It is taken for granted that work life nowadays is stressful for everyone and that one should be performing both at work and in one's free time. I think that is wrong[, we should not be living like this]! Thank you for making me think about that." This is where SL is at large also connected to societal issues, similar to how some librarians mention impatient patrons who rush in from fast-paced society and expect a swift service no matter what, which is difficult-to-truly-change patron behaviour contributing to librarian stress factors and decreasing quality in librarian practices.

In the following and final results subchapter, I summarise the patterns present in the collected material, including concrete practices, across both library types.

Patterns: a list of common practices and challenges

General work environment themes

Frequent complaints by librarians fall under the psychosocial and the physical work environment conditions. The physical can also be considered a part of the psychosocial, yet I separate them here for an easier overview, and as some aspects of the psychosocial were often mentioned in a positive context. For best practice regarding both, see International Labour Organization (2026).

Physical work environment weaknesses involved: overstimulating rooms, sounds and lights; outdated indoor infrastructure, bad air quality, bad accessibility, non-ergonomic machines, heavy lifting; disruptive or disrespectful patrons; shared and vulnerable working space in public library rooms or offices.

Psychosocial work environment strengths included: high levels of collegiality, supportive co-workers, bonding activities; autonomy over work, trust in

librarian's capability and decisions; sufficient support from leadership with prioritising and decision-making; role and responsibilities adapted to individual librarian's skills, needs and strengths; seasonal work load fluctuation and enough recovery periods; enough skilled staff for a sustainable work load distribution (no lack of experts); clear expectations, priorities and responsibilities, and clear communication surrounding that on all levels; a working culture respecting private work-free hours; good, positive, and open-for-learning communication from all parties.

In the following, I summarise detailed practices that the different librarians reported – in what they do, what works well, what is lacking, what creates problems. As a majority of these patterns overlapped between academic and public librarians, I present them together without distinguishing by library type. Equally, these lists unite material and results from all eight interviews as well as the questionnaires, thus presenting concluding lists from the entirety of my material. None of the following lists are hierarchical, the order is vaguely thematic.

Librarians' reported experiences

a) Among the practices that ended up neglected and that the librarians regularly did not manage to keep up with time-wise were: reading time (most prominent factor and for practically all librarians); environmental monitoring and keeping up with developments (omvärldsbevakning); work with the library collections (maintenance, acquaintance, and weeding); patron meeting and face-to-face conversation; reflection and evaluation; traditional qualitative library services generally, and anything that goes beyond basic daily organisational upkeep.

Especially public librarians reported rushing from one task and project to the next, getting caught up in immediate and recurring problems that require urgent and often unsustainable responses, and that their organisation is not able to keep up truly qualitative work on the whole as it currently is. Much of that is due to a regular flood of urgent spontaneous situations and requests, such as IT problems and personal patron requests with e.g. printers or admin forms, staff shortage, conflict management between or with patrons on the library premises, distracting messages and requests from in-house communication channels, or a particularly high amount of admin and (unnecessary) meetings.

Academic librarians most often regretted not being able to spend enough time on in-library patron meetings, and having work circumstances that prevent them from responding to actual patron needs in sustainable ways which yield long-lasting results. They moreover frequently reported work overload due to being the only employed expert in a specific area; and not having sufficient time to spend on independently expanding their own knowledge and skill set as needed.

Around 10% of the 81 librarians of both library types also replied that there is nothing, or nothing important, that they do not manage to keep up with time-wise. Instead, tasks sometimes merely have to wait to be completed, rather than that they are not completed at all; or it is a question of priority and what the librarian takes the time for doing.

b) Factors contributing to stress mentioned by the librarians included: sharing the space physically with different organisations (e.g. council offices, which creates a higher commotion, such as louder conversations unrelated to the library; or shared information desk with the IT department, with high patron traffic with unrelated questions and confusion about who is responsible); IT problems which take time and focus away from traditional librarian tasks; one patron queue for all questions, and not being able to take time for a longer question because someone else is calling for help with the printing machine; insufficient staffing; badly organised communication channels and incessant notifications on platforms such as Microsoft Teams; a high amount of meetings and NPM structures; project deadlines; waiting for decisions to be able to continue working on a project; a culture of innovation nonsense; the pressure to redo and renew the library, to 'reinvent the wheel', incessantly; the creation of librarian workshop groups to tackle specific problems instead of taking in help from outside the library; a lack of external resource staff employed permanently; a neverending task list, and no one else to share the workload or responsibility with; too few staff members to handle someone being on sick leave; staff shortage in general; big changes (e.g. several staff retiring) without a reevaluation and adaptation of routines; not enough union presence and support; not being truly included in important decisions and impactful changes (ingen delaktighet); a lack of centralised library resources; not being listened to by library directors about the library's needs; a neoliberal work culture; not being expert enough in one's own designated area, i.e. not having the time and support to develop skills needed for one's job; when library directors do not set boundaries outwards as to what the library is responsible for and will take on in events and tasks; unclear priorities and lack of

communication around priorities from leadership; and an unclear role as a library and librarian, a split/splintered identity (splittrad identitet).

c) Some sustainable practices that the librarians engage in include: having a sharp focus on the surrounding community's actual needs; centring work around traditional qualitative library services (e.g. literacy, the meeting with patrons); investing reflective work into the planning of projects and services; creating shared resources between libraries; questioning nonsensical initiatives out loud; setting clear boundaries and priorities for the library, and reducing library services, tasks and responsibilities according to capacity; proactively introducing accessibility work and humane structures; pushing for sustainable and ethical choices; helping and supporting each other amongst colleagues; discussing what works and what does not; dividing tasks and roles amongst staff according to individual strengths; sharing role responsibilities and having a narrow focus on parts of the target group (e.g. having several children's librarians, each with their own age range responsibility); taking time for the meeting with patrons, and working with help to self-help; taking the time to build relationships with patrons and coworkers; setting boundaries with patrons; choosing collaboration with pedagogues (fritidspedagoger) over one with security personnel (vakter) for the children and youth sections; having clear rest and recreation rules among staff (e.g. no work talk at the shared lunch table); library directors who are dedicated, and work shifts on the floor to experience their employees' perspective first-hand; good and supportive co-working culture among staff; and (own) initiatives to maintain a good co-working environment and relationships.

d) Librarians mentioned needing more of the following to ensure sustainable practices and circumstances: a library director who prioritises according to the library's best interest and can set boundaries outwards on behalf of the librarians; clear organisation aims and guidelines that are adapted to the specific library's concrete needs and circumstances; proper evaluation after events and projects; fewer and more deliberate projects; being independent from other external organisations in the shared building; a bigger or renovated building with an improved physical work environment (better air flow, accessibility, less noise and light overstimulation, less heavy lifting, functioning and adapted IT systems etc.); having one's own and quiet working space instead of an office landscape, or at least sharing a quiet room with fewer and direct colleagues; more work blocks and circumstances that permit uninterrupted focus at a longer stretch; employed external support (IT, UX, communication person etc.); more librarian staff as well as more substitutes; fairness at the workplace, especially in task delegation

between librarians and departments; more recovery and resting time; more qualitative librarian presence for patrons in the public rooms; clear and informed decisions about which societal trends the library joins or rejects; true involvement of librarians in decision processes, and following up on their participation instead of listening to librarian opinions with no consequential changes; clear communication from the leading group around changes and leaving appropriate time for changes to go through; clearer mandates for responsible staff members; no competitive culture, and no performance pressure for salary development; and certainty, security and stability (trygghet) in one's role and responsibility as a librarian.

e) The different librarians also shared the following challenges and reflections: that different staff individuals have different needs for clear guidelines and directives (as mentioned before); that all colleagues need to prioritise rest and recovery if staff each and collectively are to work more sustainably and with worktime boundaries; that planning in reading time often lies within one's own responsibility and needs to be remembered, and that it is easier not to forget such abstract tasks if they are also made into concrete scheduled tasks; that it helps to remind oneself of one's job role as a librarian and not try to do or be more than that in every moment; that the library task (uppdrag) is big and one will not be able to meet the needs of the priority groups if the library takes on too much and does not prioritise, delegate, organise resources clearly and with boundaries; that budget cuts often lead to the library's development dying, yet that a focus on possibilities instead of only the cuts could yield new helpful perspectives; that, especially at public libraries, patrons can destroy your reflective and qualitative work results (e.g. set fire to furniture, which points to further complex challenges), likewise that handling conflicts between patrons takes much energy from librarians; that patrons can be impatient and demand a fast service merely for fastness's sake, which reduces the rate of qualitative responses, and that patrons also need to practice patience at the library; that there is a librarian desire for the room to play and experiment, and that curiosity as a driving factor in staff can be a strong point; that socially sustainable practices (or SL) require(s) a personal and structural rethinking; and that many librarians and libraries work qualitatively and want to do a good job, but that that is not unique to libraries and therefore the social sustainability (or SL) question is not unique to libraries either.

Discussion

In my work process and this thesis, I have often been more focused on the criticisms I encountered about librarian work reality. This is although I also consciously spell out the positives (both in SL theory and librarian reality) because they are worth celebrating and learning from. The positives are moreover not to be taken for granted or considered to be easy or natural to achieve, as they are the result of the hard work of many labouring and passionate librarians and their directors. It is a joy that so many of the in total interviewed librarians are overall happy at their workplace (69%, see appendix #6) and do feel that their library succeeds in being a qualitative organisation. My focus on the negatives is an emphasis that arose from the critical nature of slow librarianship and because an exploration of the movement's applicability to a Swedish context therefore also presupposes the shining of a light on the shortcomings at Swedish libraries. Additionally, this emphasis arose from my more personal motivation, as mentioned in the introduction, to advocate for qualitative and sustainable practices in the library sector. Once structural shortcomings and pitfalls have been identified and highlighted, it is easier to focus on how to improve these and on where to go from there on the way to a wholly qualitative library for all humans involved.

In this final chapter, I revisit the theories presented and questions posed in this thesis, and tie together my results conclusions with the perspectives I applied on the material. The Slow or socially sustainable librarianship question in today's working contexts seems to be in as yet unorganised stages at Swedish libraries. This thesis is a first attempt at introducing this conversation in a more structural and theoretically supported manner. Slow librarianship does not have to be an answer or necessary tool in that conversation, especially in its radically critical entirety, and it might not speak to everyone. Yet applying it as a movement and perspective to one's own library and work practice seems to give concrete language, as well as rethinking and practice suggestions to where one encounters such gaps of need. I have found SL helpful as a lens for examining work environment circumstances. I have also found SL theory enriching in challenging my own thought and perspective patterns on work, especially in the realm of librarianship, which is so inherently qualitative and centred around human connection. To hear and gather the perspectives of working librarians and see how many of them were intrigued by the SL concept shows that librarians think deeply and frequently about the possibilities of qualitative work. Slow Librarianship, even if one were to choose a different name for it, is highly relevant. In the

following, I summarise the Swedish librarians' reports and how they relate to the theories I applied in this thesis.

Returning to my research questions

1. Do Swedish librarians think about slow librarianship or related concepts in their practice? If yes, how important do they deem this concept in and for their work?

This varies from “not really” to “a lot”, depending on the individual librarian and also their library's working environment. An answer on behalf of Swedish librarians is complicated by the fact that no answering librarian was thoroughly familiar with SL as a concept and could therefore not clearly identify their level of sustainable practices. Many also act sustainably, but subconsciously so. Much of SL work is inherent to a common librarian work ethic and many practices falling under SL are amongst common ‘intuitive’ librarian work. Many deem such (SL) practices as central to (qualitative) librarianship. Even the librarians critical of SL as a concept (for varying reasons, see results chapter above) are mostly critical of it because they see SL as a given, as inherent to librarian practice, and SL therefore as a superfluous concept or movement. This stands in contrast to librarians who were enthusiastic about the SL concept. Many of those librarians struggle in work environments that have higher levels of neoliberalism, which is one explanation for that perception difference. A highly neoliberal work environment introduces obstacles for librarians in carrying out qualitative work and being supported as working people, which opens up for the need for SL demands. In this, SL as a movement can address much that librarians without the knowledge of such an organised concept have been frustratedly discussing about. An overwhelming majority of librarians do however think (and worry) about carrying out qualitative work, and deem it central to librarianship. Not all think about sustainable aspects necessarily, yet most agree that more (social) sustainability in practice or SL as they understand it would be enriching.

2. Which slow librarianship practices do Swedish librarians make use of in their everyday work?

The most central qualitative and sustainable practices Swedish librarians make use of are: a focus on patrons and patron needs, taking time for patrons, making space for reflection time, setting appropriate organisational priorities, setting worktime and responsibility boundaries, and prioritising quality over quantity in their work. When their work environment is unsupportive, inhibiting or lacking in quality,

these are the practices that they miss and worry about being able to carry out first and most.

3. If they are kept from slow work practices, which obstacles do Swedish librarians encounter when trying to work according to slow librarianship principles?

A significant aspect is indeed neoliberal (and NPM) culture, in which statistics, quantifiable results and measured performance are prioritised over quality, sustainability and staff wellbeing. Some Swedish librarians report a significant and detrimental level of neoliberal culture at their libraries, though by far not all. Neoliberal thinking, values, and compliance specifically among leadership and library directors also play a frequent frustrating role. It is noteworthy here that more public than academic librarians report this, which is interesting in face of the common academic critiques of the neoliberal university, and could be explained by Swedish public libraries as a more communal part of society having to deal with more outside political pressures to perform in certain ways. A further central obstacle to a SL library are budget cuts, but more so the effect of wrong prioritisation following budget cuts. Many librarians report a lack of re-prioritising and working structure change after big financial cuts, which leads to unsustainable working conditions and lesser quality in the offered library services. Budget cuts are also related to staff shortage, recruitment stops, resulting higher workload, and to lack of office space because of rising costs of premises – all of which lead to lower work environment quality, and less sustainable circumstances for librarians to carry out good work in (cf. Hilburger, Richmond & Wilkes 2026, p. 80).

The next subchapter returns to my theoretical background, analysing what power library staff can have in impacting their work reality through carefully chosen practices.

Change through sustainable practice

According to institutional theory, institutions are “vehicles for activity within constraints” (Jepperson 1991, p. 41), which means that they limit and prescribe their participants’ actions, norms, and routine practices. Institutions leave the freedom for their participants or actors to act individually within it to a certain degree, however, actions are nevertheless pre-programmed and thereby suggest a common or default practice (ibid., p. 42). This is because of how institutions;

surrounding social and cultural norms; and the institutions' participants as simultaneous individuals within and shaped by the broader society, interplay. None of the individual parts are ever exempt from their societal context and its influence and normativity. In order to have participants reshape or change institutions with their practices (e.g. implement slow librarianship at a neoliberal library), the participants need to change their own norms first regardless of societal influence (become Slow librarians of conviction). They then carry their (new, different) norms and practices into the institution. Institutional change is brought about when the reproduction of normalised institutional practices is resisted, blocked and rejected (Jepperson 1991, p. 49), as well as replaced with other behaviour which with time becomes the new routine. The more this happens collectively, the more is change brought about. The more librarians link arms with their colleagues to act according to practices prioritising quality and sustainability, refuse to sacrifice their own rest and well-being, and collectively demand good librarian leadership which sets sensible boundaries outwards from their directors, the more is qualitative change at libraries likely.

Practice theory, like institutional theory, emphasises the human situatedness in a given social context, according to which each individual reproduces a certain set of practices. From a more process-oriented practice theoretical standpoint as suggested by Stanley Blue (2026) (see theory chapter) however, the focus on identity departs for a focus on and acknowledgement of perpetual change. This proposes that SL does not have to disrupt a previous non-sustainable structure – as institutional theory would have it – but that the library as an institution is already constantly changing and wavering and remade every day. The difference is that one would make different choices from one day to the next, and thereby facilitate the natural transition into a more sustainable institution, rather than that one would violently break (with) the institution's structure and norms as they are and rebuild new structures from the rubble. Whichever theoretical way one looks at it, what they collectively posit is that change is possible and that it is brought about by a change in one's practices.

A process-oriented practice theory especially underlines the focus on the aforementioned "plenum of practices" (Blue 2026, p. 197), i.e. collective action. It is not merely the application of SL practices in itself, nor the power of librarians in themselves, but the power of a collective group of librarians applying SL practices *together*. Only thus can the system shift to being more sustainable on the whole and in the long run. A feminist ethics of care perspective concurs with that position. It goes moreover further in emphasising human interdependence and our

need for and of each other, which is not least relevant within librarianship, both amongst library staff and in relation to patrons, especially vulnerable or marginalised individuals and groups. A feminist ethics of care can be especially relevant for public librarians, as it recognises that each situation with its context is unique and requires its own decision – something that SL's reflective practice (see background) connects to in an attempt to make easier such decision-making processes in the acute and overwhelming moment. The working against neoliberal values that a feminist ethics provides and argues is of high relevance and help for librarians struggling in a neoliberal environment and interested in SL. It is also (consciously or not) present in qualitative practices that Swedish librarians make use of especially when it comes to sustainable patron work in socio-economically vulnerable districts, where librarians choose the consistent, personal and caring meeting with their patrons, especially kids, over defensive and threatening mechanisms, e.g. through collaborating with pedagogues instead of employing security personnel for the youth section. Keeping a balance of care and reflective work that protects the librarian's wellbeing and need for recovery from taxing situations (of (attempted) care) is something SL can help with, as it deeply engages with exactly such tensions of social justice, social work, and the library as intersecting areas.

Institutional, practice, and feminist care theory thereby both offer a relevant lens on librarianship working conditions and their potential need for change, as well as support SL in its theoretical claims and solidify it as a well-founded movement. What they all have in common is an emphasis on the potential and possibility of change, as well as on the collective action needed to achieve structural change. The research results from my survey on Swedish librarian working conditions show that there is indeed a detrimental presence of inhibitors to qualitative work at Swedish libraries (among other neoliberal structures), and that many Swedish librarians are interested in a practically applicable theory of more sustainable and qualitative work, such as slow librarianship is one. It is felt nationally and across library types that there are good conditions for Swedish libraries on the whole, and that many libraries have enthusiastic, professional and dedicated staff interested in the best for the library and its patrons. It is also felt widely that better circumstances are occasionally missing; that not every library, or director, or librarian, is able to work qualitatively and sustainably, and my research shows that there are structural patterns to this. Making use of SL as a theory and movement is a response idea to that situation. My results in the previous chapter have shown the many parallels to SL practices and SL literature claims present in Swedish librarian practices and circumstances. The focus to date on academic libraries in

SL literature and research is expanded by my survey including (in the questionnaire responses even a majority of) public librarians and their voices on the matter. I will discuss the differences between library types and what they suggest in the following.

Public vs academic libraries

The differences between public and academic libraries point amongst other to different reasons for sustainable practices needs. If public librarians' stress levels are first and foremost so high because of overstimulating and challenging patron work – being a librarian as well as a sort of social worker – this requires better circumstances and tools for librarians to handle these situations sustainably, as well as a de-escalation of aggravating patterns. Many libraries already work competently with these questions, e.g. through partaking in research and skill-building, increasing staff numbers in the room, or collaborating with external social organisations. A neoliberal working environment is not restricted to one library type and can make itself manifest at different individual libraries across the board, which contributes to significant frustration among librarians and to the inhibition of qualitative practices and services. What libraries in *need* of SL have in common, regardless of library type, are practices that prioritise quantity and measurable performance over qualitative work; unsupportive and ignorant leadership; a lack of support and understanding for the librarian as a human with individual needs; a hostile co-working environment; and a lack of sensible goals, priorities and clear boundaries as to role and responsibilities of the library and its librarians.

Slow librarianship at every library?

Slow librarianship practices and SL as a movement calls for exactly a response to these above patterns, suggesting concrete sustainable and qualitative practices as a conscious and determined alternative, which for true and valuable change has to be carried out by the entirety of the library organisation and consistently. All of the librarians I interviewed have in essence proved their inherent urge and wish for such a qualitative and sustainable organisation. Librarian reality is however often complicated by various obstructing circumstances. To achieve such transformative change, which frequently requires rethinking, is a long-winded, slow, uncertain process – whereas qualitative practices are needed in libraries now and immediately, and much of that need can indeed be met by for instance higher staffing or leadership setting clearer priorities, as has been brought up by (SL-sceptical) librarian respondents. SL can seem fairly vague and also not fully

realistic or truly relevant under these considerations. Alternatively, SL's social justice aspect can depart from the feeling of it being an abstract trend and easily seem like too much. One of the key points in my results after all is librarians' emphases on the importance of not trying to do or be too much as a library or librarian either. The librarian task is overwhelming and complex enough without one taking on the task of fighting for social justice even more so than what might already be present. Besides, such an activist role might not come naturally to some (Swedish) librarians, nor does it have to. Whereas SL does highlight the need for sensible boundaries and relevant priorities, its social justice core creates a tension in this that does exist. This makes SL a complex and challenging concept that does not shy away from uncomfortable confrontations with long-established norms and expectations.

The advantages SL presents thus lie perhaps more in the value the movement has for individual librarians and their communal discussions about how they want to challenge their own norms and most of all shape the library as an organisation, i.e. for librarian thinking impulses – instead of attempting to introduce SL into the general library sphere as a new ideal trend. A widespread introduction as such would moreover pose the challenge of its near impossibility in truly translating and applying it to all the various libraries, especially top-down. SL is an inside-out movement, with humane values that collide with the capitalist norms our society imposes on library structures and institutions. It has to be lived from within and begun with the individual librarian, if one were to choose to apply it. Apart from being useful as an inspiring thought impulse, SL has the advantage that it considers many details across the whole set-up of the librarian organisation and thereby acts like a work environment magnifying glass. This means that in making use of existing SL research, librarians could identify key (overlooked) points which, when (re)considered, could make a significant difference for their work environment quality. Examples of that could be staff collegiality and how that culture is created in the small aspects; equity and *truly* anti-racist practice within small collection decisions and acquisition standardisations; personal boundary-setting; neurodivergent-friendly accommodations; expectations about being available after-hours; or how in-house communication channels operate and are organised. Librarians also already pay attention to many such details and pick up on such needs (as presented in the patterns subchapter). SL could be a tool to discuss these observations openly amongst each other and with leaders at one's library, and perhaps make that conversation easier through the ability to refer to an established academic concept.

There are also parallels between common librarian critiques – even of SL sceptics, for whichever reason their scepticism may be – and the critiques that slow librarianship puts forward. Both boils down to an outrage over not being able to carry out qualitative work that is good for all humans involved – an outrage over losing the vision and reality of being a Library. Many Swedish librarians also work in libraries that do work qualitatively and have supportive colleagues and leadership, even if these libraries do not necessarily follow SL patterns – although I argue that their practices and the ones of SL overlap. These are sustainable librarians happy in their work. The goal is to see more of this. Slow librarianship is not the sole solution, but, in parallel to SL scholars, I argue it could be a useful gateway into tackling issues at libraries where there is a lack of social sustainability and quality in work processes and results. Furthermore, the situation does not have to be dire to warrant the application of SL as a theory and with its principles. Rather, the SL movement offers all of us humans living in the technological and fast-paced 21st century questions to consider in order to find more depth, connection and value in our work, private life, and work life. Arguably, everyone benefits from SL impulses put into thought if not practice, regardless of their context and possibilities. The strong advantage of SL is that it is a well thought-through movement, where practice details *and* the holistic library institution with all its involved humans and needs has been considered by its scholars and proponents. SL goes beyond a focus on one specific practice, success, or problem, and considers the organisation from the inside out, aiming to feed all its roots. To follow or at least be inspired by SL the movement and theory means to look at all the library's parts and at what they need to flourish.

A library doing truly good work is built not least on the energy and capacity of its librarians, which makes questions of staff wellbeing essential. As one librarian responding to the questionnaire summarised:

Yes, it should become a discussion around that we should have an influence over our own everyday work reality and be able to choose our own tools and methods. ... The library is no commercial place but a meeting place and a democratic institution, and we need such places where humans are allowed the space to grow and belong. The staff are unbelievably important for this. At my workplace, leadership should highlight and recognise this more. It is time that we get to decide over our own time, choose which shifts suit us best, that it is respected that some tasks take more time, that we celebrate communal successes, nourish and cherish the human(e), and practise democracy at the workplace. Just as staff is treated, so will patrons be treated.

This librarian mentions many aspects that make up SL as a movement. Not only are many SL principles inherent in the qualitative work and circumstances that librarians call for, but the movement also goes further in demanding truly good realities and sustainable futures for workers – as the here quoted librarian arguably does. In the strive for a democratic society and a democratic library – democracy indeed has to live and breathe at the work place, too.

The key point ultimately is to look at what our libraries and librarians need to be able to work well and to do so in the long run. Many librarians already know what they require for that, and the fight for good librarian working conditions continues in Sweden, even without SL. The central takeaway in this case might be an encouragement for Swedish librarians to discuss more and honestly with each other (with or without SL), about what they and their libraries need and want, how this can be created together, and to stand up for it; with empathy, mutual respect, and working together. My research material shows that there is no shortage of dedicated, intelligent and compassionate librarians. It is a shame when detrimental working conditions eradicate that spark in so many. Libraries are vibrant and breathing, actively changing spaces that transform together with their societies and patrons' changing needs. They are also essential pillars in the information society. Creating sustainable circumstances for libraries and their working and visiting humans is the best we can do for thriving libraries and a healthy society.

References

- Ahmed, S. K. et al. (2025). Using thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 6.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2025.100198>.
- Alm Dahlin, J. (2021). Society Retreats – A Report about the Work Environment in Swedish Libraries. *Public Library Quarterly*, 40(1): pp. 77–94.
[doi:10.1080/01616846.2020.1737492](https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2020.1737492).
- Arbetsmiljöverket. (2026). Riktlinjer vid autism eller adhd på arbetsplatsen – hälsofrämjande insatser och arbetsanpassningar. *Riktlinjer för företagshälsan nr 8*, 2026(3).
<https://www.av.se/globalassets/filer/publikationer/riktlinjer-for-foretagshalsovarder/riktlinjer-vid-autism-eller-adhd-pa-arbetsplatsen-riktlinje-8.pdf>.
- Aspinall, K. & Duncan, J. (2026). The ‘hidden roots’ of neoliberal fascism: race, gender and the intensification of neoliberal hegemony. *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory*, pp. 1-24.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1600910X.2025.2587703>.
- Ballard, B. (2026). The Paradox of Pace. Slow Librarianship Through a Disabled Lens. In *Slow Librarianship* (2026), ed. Ashley Rosener, pp. 409-436.
- Bartos, A. E. (2019). Introduction: stretching the boundaries of care. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 26(6): pp. 767-777.
- Berg, M. & Seeber, B. K. (2016). *The Slow Professor. Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy*.
- Bergland, B. (2017). The incompatibility of neoliberal university structures and interdisciplinary knowledge: A feminist slow scholarship critique. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 50(11): pp. 1029-1034.
- Blue, S. (2026). *Practice Theory and Process Philosophy. Towards a Sociology of Becoming*. Routledge.
- Bornemark, J. (2018). *Det Omätbaras Renässans. En uppgörelse med pedanternas världsherravälde*.
- Brady, F. (2023). Scaffolded Information Literacy Curriculum: Slow Librarianship as a Rejection of the Hegemony of Neoliberalism. *Journal of New Librarianship*, 8(2): pp. 29-40.
<https://doi.org/10.33011/newlibs/14/2>.
- brown, a. m. (2017). *Emergent Strategy*.
- Buschman, J. (2020a). Education, the Public Sphere, and Neoliberalism: Libraries’ Contexts. *Library Quarterly*, 90(2): pp. 154–161.
[doi:10.1086/707671](https://doi.org/10.1086/707671).

- Buschman, J. (2020b). Public Libraries Are Doing Just Fine, Thank You: It's the "Public" in Public Libraries That is Threatened. *Canadian Journal of Information & Library Sciences*, 43(2): pp. 158–171. doi:10.3138/cjils.e10607.
- Clemens, A. (2024). Står självbilden i vägen för antirasistiskt arbete? *Biblioteksbladet*. <https://www.biblioteksbladet.se/nyheter/star-sjלבilden-i-vagen-for-antirasistiskt-arbete/> [30-04-2026]
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), article 8. <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43: pp. 1241-1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>.
- Dutta, S. J., Knafo, S., & Lovering, I. (2023). What is neoliberal about new public management? In *Handbook on Critical Political Economy and Public Policy* (2023), eds. Christoph Scherrer, Ana Garcia & Joscha Wullweber, pp. 95-108. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800373785.00015>.
- Eriksson, T. (2021). Kortlivad grupp för mångfald. *Biblioteksbladet*. <https://www.biblioteksbladet.se/nyheter/reportage/kortlivad-grupp-for-mangfald/> [30-04-2026]
- Eriksson-Zetterquist, U. (2009). *Institutionell teori – idéer, moden, förändring*. Liber.
- Farkas, M. G. (2021). What is slow librarianship? *Information Wants To Be Free*. 18 Oct 2021. <https://meredith.wolfwater.com/wordpress/2021/10/18/what-is-slow-librarianship/> [05-02-2026]
- Farkas, M. G. (2026). Neoliberal Time and the Promise of Slow Librarianship. In *Slow Librarianship* (2026), ed. Ashley Rosener, pp. 7-22.
- Frank, J. (2026). Slow Librarianship as a Catalyst for Change. Reimagining Academic Library Culture while Maximizing Impact. In *Slow Librarianship* (2026), ed. Ashley Rosener, pp. 39-55.
- Gervasio, D. I., Detterbeck, K. & Oling, R. (2026). Slow Assessment Revisited. Finding Space for Authentic Assessment in Slow Librarianship. In *Slow Librarianship* (2026), ed. Ashley Rosener, pp. 130-150.
- Gibb, L. (2026). Relationship Building Through Collections. Working with Local Independent Booksellers to Meet Community Needs. In *Slow Librarianship* (2026), ed. Ashley Rosener, pp. 185-206.

- Glassman, J. (2017). The Innovation Fetish And Slow Librarianship: What Librarians Can Learn From The Juicero. In *The Library With The Lead Pipe*, 18 Oct 2017. <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2017/the-innovation-fetish-and-slow-librarianship-what-librarians-can-learn-from-the-juicero/>.
- Hansson, J. (2011). Public libraries and the national minorities of Sweden – results of a national survey. *New Library World*, 112(9/10): pp. 406–415. doi:10.1108/03074801111182003.
- Hansson, J. (2023). Public libraries in language assimilation policies: The Swedish Tornedalian example. *IFLA Journal*, 49(4): pp. 724–731. doi:10.1177/03400352231192126.
- Hantera Agera (2025). *Det vi inte ska tåla. Arbetsmiljöproblem i bibliotek. Dokumenterade händelser och förslag till förbättring.*
- Hilburger, C. R., Richmond, S. S. & Wilkes, K. F. (2026). Three Perspectives on Slow Librarianship. Balancing Values and Demands in Different Career Stages. In *Slow Librarianship* (2026), ed. Ashley Rosener, pp. 75-92.
- Honoré, C. (2004). In *Praise of Slowness. Challenging the Cult of Speed.*
- International Labour Organization. (2026). *The Psychosocial Working Environment. Global Developments and Pathways for Action. Global Report.* <https://doi.org/10.54394/00033223>.
- Jackson, L., Deaver, J. & Solomon, M. (2026). Fast Questions and Thoughtful Answers. Balancing Innovation, Inclusivity, and Slow Librarianship. In *Slow Librarianship* (2026), ed. Ashley Rosener, pp. 117-127.
- Jepperson, R. L. (1991). Institutions, Institutional Effects, and Institutionalism. In *Institutional Theory. The Cultural Construction of Organizations, States, and Identities* (2021), Ronald L. Jepperson & John W. Meyer, pp. 37-66.
- Jepperson, R. L. (2002). The Development and Application of Sociological Neoinstitutionalism. In *Institutional Theory. The Cultural Construction of Organizations, States, and Identities* (2021), Ronald L. Jepperson & John W. Meyer, pp. 67-125.
- Johnson, M. W. (2024). Keeping Up With... Burnout. *American Library Association.* https://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/keeping_up_with/burnout [05-02-2026]
- Jones, N. (2015). Power, Violence, Bodies and Boundaries. *Scandinavian Public Library Quarterly*, 48(3): pp. 6–8.
- Kann-Rasmussen, N., Christensen, H. D., Jochumsen, H. & Hvenegaard Rasmussen, C. (2026). Neutrality reconsidered: an analysis of research

- across libraries, archives and museums. *Journal of Documentation*.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-11-2025-0348>.
- Kaufman, E. C., Chennault, C. & Molana, H. (2024). Slow(ed) Scholarship: On Crip Time and Refusal from the Intersections of Privilege and Precarity. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 23(5): pp. 379-401.
- Koziura, A. & Becker, S. (2024). Maintenance as a Core Value. Recommendations for Increasing Gender Equity on Digital Scholarship Teams. In *Toxic Dynamics: Disrupting, Dismantling, and Transforming Academic Library Culture* (2024), ed. Russell Michalak, Trevor A. Dawes & Jon E. Cawthorne, pp. 179-200.
https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles/760.
- Kundnani, A. (2021). The racial constitution of neoliberalism. *Race & Class*, 63(1): pp. 51-69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396821992706>.
- Lindh, K. & Haider, J. (2010). Development and the Documentation of Indigenous Knowledge: Good Intentions in Bad Company? *Libri: International Journal of Libraries & Information Services*, 60(1): pp. 1–14. doi:10.1515/libr.2010.001.
- Liu, T. & Fallis, J. (2026). Beyond Mere Quantity. How Neoliberal Approaches to EDI Further Embed Inequities. In *Slow Librarianship* (2026), ed. Ashley Rosener, pp. 327-353.
- MacKay, K. (2019). Feminism and Feminist Ethics. *Introduction to Philosophy: Ethics* (2019), eds. George Matthews & Christina Hendricks, ch. 7.
<https://press.rebus.community/intro-to-phil-ethics/chapter/feminism-and-feminist-ethics/>.
- Malatino, H., McKiernan, A. & Clark Miller, S. (2023). Care Ethic Otherwise: Introduction. *Essays in Philosophy*, 24(1-2): pp. 1-10.
- Mann, S. (2026). Reorienting Library Technology Through Slowness and Care. In *Slow Librarianship* (2026), ed. Ashley Rosener, pp. 237-258.
- Mountz, A. et al. (2015). For Slow Scholarship: A Feminist Politics of Resistance through Collective Action in the Neoliberal University. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 14(4): pp. 1235-1259.
- Naeem, M. et al. (2023). A Step-by-Step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789>.
- Nicholson, K. P. (2019). Time, New Public Management, and Canadian Academic Librarians' Scholarship and Service. *Canadian Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 5: pp. 1–29.

- Oliver, A. (2022). *Overdue. Reckoning with the Public Library*. Chicago Review Press.
- Olssen, M. & Peters, M. A. (2005). Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: from the free market to knowledge capitalism. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(3): pp. 313–345.
doi:10.1080/02680930500108718.
- Petrini, C. (2015). Appetite and Thought. In *Slow Food: The Case For Taste*, pp. 1-36. Columbia University Press.
<https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.7312/petr12844-004/html>.
- Poole, N. (2023). In Praise of ‘slow librarianship’. *Medium*. <https://nick-poole.medium.com/in-praise-of-slow-librarianship-93eedfc83df6> [05-02-2026]
- Pope, E. (2026). Reflective Practice for Slow Librarianship. In *Slow Librarianship* (2026), ed. Ashley Rosener, pp. 103-114.
- Rivano Eckerdal, J. & Engström, L. (2024). Rekommendationer: Stärk bibliotekariers sociala roll. *Infrastructuring Libraries in Transformation (ILIT)*.
- Rivera, E. & Semrau, L. (2026). Building Collaborations and Connections Through Slow Librarianship. In *Slow Librarianship* (2026), ed. Ashley Rosener, pp. 57-73.
- Rosa, H. (2013). *Alienation and Acceleration. Towards a Critical Theory of Late-Modern Temporality*.
- Sánchez-Pita, F. & Cabezas-Clavijo, Á. (2025). Who cares about rural libraries? Tracking a neglected research topic in library and information science. *Library & Information Science Research*, 47(2).
- Scarrit, A. (2022). Tripartheid: How Global White Supremacy Triumphs through Neoliberalism. In *Totality Inside Out: Rethinking Crisis and Conflict under Capital* (2022), eds. Kevin Floyd et al., pp. 91-134.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2795075.6>.
- Schatzki, T. R., Knorr Cetina, K. & von Savigny, E. (2001). *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. Routledge.
- SFS 2013:801. *Bibliotekslagen*. https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/bibliotekslag-2013801_sfs-2013-801/ [10-05-2026]
- Slow Food Foundation. Our History. <https://www.slowfood.com/our-history/> [07-04-2026]

- Smith, D. L., Bazalar, B. & Wheeler, M. (2020). Public Librarian Job Stressors and Burnout Predictors. *Journal of Library Administration*, 60(4): pp. 412–429. doi:10.1080/01930826.2020.1733347.
- Steger, M. B., & Roy, R. K. (2021). *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction*. 2nd edn., Oxford Academic.
<https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1093/actrade/9780198849674.001.0001>.
- Szocik, K. (2024). An Introduction to Feminist Ethics and Bioethics. *Feminist Bioethics in Space: Gender Inequality in Space Exploration*, pp. 4-33.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/9780197691076.003.0002>.
- Uppsala Universitet. Neoliberalism in the Nordics. Research programme.
<https://www.uu.se/en/departement/history-of-science-and-ideas/research/research-projects-and-programmes/neoliberalism-in-the-nordics> [30-04-2026]
- Weilenmann, L. (2017). Bibliotekarier lika stressade som sjuksköterskor. *Vårdfokus*.
<https://www.vardfokus.se/yrkesroller/sjukskoterska/bibliotekarier-lika-stressade-som-sjukskoterskor/> [05-02-2026]

Appendix

1) interview request email:

Hej!

Jag heter Katharina Stumpf och är en masterstudent vid Lunds universitet inom biblioteksvetenskap som just nu skriver sin uppsats om 'slow librarianship' och svenska bibliotekariers arbetsmiljö.

Du får det här mejlet eftersom jag är intresserad av att intervjua en av era bibliotekarier för min forskning. Jag skulle gärna ställa dig några frågor om hur du upplever din yrkespraktik gällande tids- och prestationspress.

Om du är intresserad av att få mer information och potentiellt ställa upp för en intervju, hör gärna av dig till mig via mailadress xxx så berättar jag med glädje mer i detalj.

Här är en länk till läsning om slow librarianship för de intresserade:

Meredith Farkas, What is Slow Librarianship?

<https://meredith.wolfwater.com/wordpress/2021/10/18/what-is-slow-librarianship/>

Eller lite kortare - American Library Association,

https://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/keeping_up_with/slow_librarianship

[Om du inte är särskilt intresserad av medvetet arbete i sig gör det inget, intervjun skulle kretsa mest kring hur just du upplever din yrkesvardag generellt sett. Jag uppskattar allt medverkansintresse! (*this was added in a second request round*)]

Tack för din tid och allt gott!

Med vänlig hälsning,

Katharina (en blivande bibliotekarie)

2a) Consent form via email as a follow-up to interested responses:

Här kommer mer info om hela upplägget:

Intervjun kommer ta mellan 45-60 minuter och den kommer att spelas in. Inspelningen kommer inte att spridas vidare och de som blir intervjuade kommer att pseudonymiseras i uppsatsen (se nedan för vidare info).

Min studie syftar till att utveckla en fördjupad kunskap om slow librarianship i Sverige. Jag är intresserad av hur svenska bibliotekarier upplever deras arbetsmiljö vad gäller prestationspress, och vilka praktiker som bibliotekarier tillämpar för att arbeta på ett i möjligaste mån värde-centrerad och personligt hållbart sätt.

Forskningshuvudman för projektet är Lunds universitet. Ditt deltagande är frivilligt och du kan när som helst välja att avbryta deltagandet utan att uppge varför och genom att kontakta mig eller min handledare (se nedan).

Vad händer med dina uppgifter?

Intervjuerna kommer att sparas ner som ljudfiler. Därefter transkriberas de i textfiler. Personuppgifter kommer att pseudonymiseras och hanteras konfidentiellt. Namn på intervjuade personer kommer inte finnas i uppsatsen, istället används påhittade namn eller koder. Allt insamlat material raderas när uppsatsen är godkänd (detta är förväntad att ske juni 2026, dock tidigast).

Dina svar och dina uppgifter kommer att behandlas så att enbart jag och min handledare kommer att kunna ta del av dem. Ansvarig för dina personuppgifter är Lunds universitet. Enligt EU:s dataskyddsförordning (GDPR) har du rätt att kostnadsfritt få ta del av de uppgifter om dig som hanteras i projektet, och vid behov få eventuella fel rättade. Du kan också begära att uppgifter om dig raderas samt att behandlingen av dina personuppgifter begränsas.

Om du vill ta del av uppgifterna ska du kontakta mig. För frågor om dataskydd, kontakta dataskyddsombudet via e-post: xxx.

Om du är missnöjd med hur dina personuppgifter behandlas har du rätt att lämna in klagomål till Integritetsskyddsmyndigheten, som är tillsynsmyndighet. Information om detta finns på myndighetens webbplats (imy.se).

Behandling av personuppgifter är nödvändig för att genomföra uppsatsarbetet. Enligt GDPR får behandling av personuppgifter endast ske om det finns en giltig rättslig grund. Lunds universitet bedömer att behandlingen av personuppgifter inom ramen för studentarbetet stödjer sig på den rättsliga grunden "allmänt intresse".

Hur får du information om resultatet av projektet?

Den godkända uppsatsen kommer att finnas tillgänglig på Lund Student Papers:
<https://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/search>

Kontaktuppgifter

E-post: xxx

Mitt telefonnummer: xxx

Handledare: xxx

Handledarens e-post: xxx

Handledarens telefonnummer: xxx

Om du vill fortfarande delta i studien så bekräftar du att du har tagit del av informationen och ger ditt samtycke till att bli intervjuad. Det kan du göra genom att besvara detta mail med följande fras:

"Jag har tagit del av informationen och ger mitt samtycke till att bli intervjuad."

2b) I also made use of a handwritten paper form at the beginning of the interviews in the cases where respondents did not reply with a clear consenting sentence to my email:

Jag har blivit informerad om forskningsprojektet och om hur mina uppgifter hanteras. Jag ger mitt samtycke till att bli intervjuad under de gällande villkoren.

...[underskrift]...

3) Questionnaire request email:

Hej!

Jag heter Katharina Stumpf och är en masterstudent vid Lunds universitet inom biblioteksvetenskap som just nu skriver sin uppsats om 'slow librarianship' och svenska bibliotekariers arbetsmiljö.

Du får det här mejlet eftersom jag samlar in erfarenheter och synpunkter från bibliotekarier runt om i Sverige. Jag skulle vara mycket tacksam om du kunde fylla in den här enkäten och även sprida vidare den bland dina kollegor:

<https://survey.mailing.lu.se/Survey/64325>

Enkäten innehåller frågor om hur du upplever din yrkespraktik gällande tids- och prestationspress, beräknad svarstid är cirka 20-40 minuter. Den stängs den 20 april.

Ditt deltagande i enkäten är anonymt och alla svar kommer hanteras konfidentiellt.

Vid frågor kan du alltid kontakta mig via xxx.

Den godkända uppsatsen kommer att finnas tillgänglig på Lund Student Papers: <https://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/search> under mitt namn, Katharina Stumpf, efter sommaren 2026.

Här är en länk till läsning om slow librarianship för de intresserade:

Meredith Farkas, What is Slow Librarianship?

<https://meredith.wolfwater.com/wordpress/2021/10/18/what-is-slow-librarianship/>

Eller lite kortare - American Library Association,

https://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/keeping_up_with/slow_librarianship

Tack för din medverkan och allt gott!

Med vänlig hälsning,

Katharina (en blivande bibliotekarie)

4) Interview guide:

Inledning

1. Hur länge har du varit bibliotekarie? Hur länge vid det här biblioteket?
2. Kan du kort berätta om bibliotekets omständigheter?
3. Kan du kort berätta om din roll och vad ditt ansvar som bibliotekarie är?

Huvuddel I - arbetserfarenheter

4. Hur upplever du din yrkesvardag vad gäller tids- och prestationspress?

Huvuddel II – tema slow librarianship

5. Har du hört talas om begreppet 'slow librarianship' förut?
6. Jag använder begreppet 'SL' för alla praktiker som ingår i medvetet, långsammare, människo- och värdecentrerat arbete som motstår neoliberala och enkelt mätbara prestationskrav. Använder du dig av sådana praktiker? (ger ex.)
7. Ser du ett behov för SL/mer medvetna praktiker på ditt jobb eller hos dig själv?
8. Är dina kollegor och chefer öppna för mer långsamma och medvetna arbetspraktiker?
9. Pratar ni om sådana praktiker bland kollegorna?

Avslutning

10. Hur ser du på det svenska biblioteksväsendet och behovet av mer medvetna praktiker generellt?
11. Finns det något du vill lägga till? Slutliga tankar kring SL konceptet?

5) Questionnaire:

Genom att besvara den här enkäten samtycker du till att dina svar sparas och används som material för en masteruppsats vid Lunds Universitet.
Du är anonym i enkäten och all identifierande information kommer pseudonymiseras i den slutliga uppsatsen.

Vid frågor kan du kontakta mig, uppsatsens författare, via katharina.stumpf.6466@student.lu.se.

Den färdiga uppsatsen kommer vara tillgänglig via webbsidan *Lund Student Papers* under mitt namn, Katharina Stumpf, tidigast från sommaren 2026.

Tack för din medverkan!

☐ Jag nekar samtycke

☒ Jag samtycker

Den här enkäten ägnar sig åt svenska bibliotekariers erfarenheter vad gäller tids- och prestationspress i deras yrkesvardag. Materialet som samlas in här kommer användas i en masteruppsats om 'slow librarianship', med fokus på medvetna och värde-centrerade arbetspraktiker inom neoliberala sammanhang.

Jag vill gärna veta hur du upplever ditt arbete som bibliotekarie och hur du ser på den svenska bibliotekarieskapen. Uppsatsens mål är bl.a. att uppmuntra till en bättre arbetsmiljö för bibliotekarier. Du behöver inte känna till slow librarianship och du bestämmer själv vilka frågor du eventuellt hoppar över, dock uppskattar jag allt du delar med dig av, även korta svar är hjälpsamma.

Enkäten är textsvar-baserad där du kan skriva fritt i fält. Den har även några frågor med flervalsrutor där du kan varje gång kryssa i flera svar.

Svar på både svenska och engelska godtas.

Enkäten tar cirka 20-40 minuter att fylla in.



LUNDS
UNIVERSITET

"Slow librarianship is an antiracist, responsive, and values-driven practice that stands in opposition to neoliberal values. Workers in slow libraries are focused on relationship-building, deeply understanding and meeting patron needs, and providing equitable services to their communities. Internally, slow library culture is focused on learning and reflection, collaboration and solidarity, valuing all kinds of contributions, and supporting staff as whole people. Slow librarianship is a process, not a destination; it is an orientation towards our work, ourselves, and others that creates positive change. It is an organizational philosophy that supports workers and builds stronger relationships with our communities."

(Meredith Farkas, "What Is Slow Librarianship?" *Information Wants To Be Free*, 2021)

1. Är du bekant med konceptet 'slow librarianship' från tidigare?

- ☐ Ja
☐ Nej

Kommentar

1 2 3 4 5

Nästa sida >> ▶

2. Din bakgrund (*sammanfatta kort*):

- a) Hur många år har du jobbat som bibliotekarie? (*en ungefär siffra*)
b) På vilken bibliotekstyp jobbar du nu (folk-/lärosätes-/skol-/annat bibliotek)?

3. Vad är din roll och ditt ansvar som bibliotekarie på ditt nuvarande bibliotek?

(*nämn kort dina områden / yrkestitel, samt gärna hur länge du har jobbat där och om din tjänst är på heltid*)

4. Vad är ditt biblioteks omständigheter/förutsättningar?

(*nämn kort om biblioteket är stort/mellanstort/litet; cirka hur många kollegor du delar din arbetsplats med; om biblioteket ingår i en annan institution; om bibliotekets budget är tillräcklig eller för liten; evtl. uppdrag specifika för ditt bibliotek*)

◀ << Föregående sida

1 2 3 4 5

Nästa sida >> ▶

5. Känner du tidspress under ditt dagliga arbete?

- ☐ nej, jag får bestämma mycket av mitt arbetstempo själv
☐ lite, det finns alltid någon uppgift som väntar
☐ ja, jag har många förväntningar att möta
☐ mycket, jag hinner knappt eller inte med mina uppgifter
☐ lagom, det varierar i faser

Kommentar

6. a) Får du bestämma själv över hur du lägger upp dina arbetsuppgifter? (*bortsett från schemalagda pass i informationsdisken*)

b) Finns det något som ofta faller bort då tiden inte räcker till? (*t.ex. en uppgift, lästid, eller dialogen med användarna*) Om ja, vad och varför?

7. **a)** Forskar du? (om nej, kan du hoppa över frågan) Är det förväntat (implicit eller explicit)?

b) Upplever du hinder till din (potentiella) forskning? Om ja, vilka?

(detta kan även vara individuell osäkerhet/tvekan, eller avvisande stämning från kollegor/chefer)

c) Om du forskar, sker detta regelbundet och med framgång? Eller går det snarare segt? Varför det? (även individuella skäl är relevanta)

8. Hur stressad känner du dig generellt på och med ditt jobb?

(utgående från din vardagliga upplevelse och direkt kopplad till din arbetsplats och dina uppgifter)

(kommentera gärna om du upplever ett stort glapp mellan objektiv och subjektiv upplevelse, t.ex. på grund av NPF, språkkunskaper, eller hög stresstolerans)

- ☐ inte stressad alls, avslappnad
- ☐ ibland lite stressad, men det är snarare ett undantag
- ☐ ofta stressad, jag tycker mitt jobb är generellt stressigt
- ☐ väldigt ofta stressad, det påverkar min arbetsförmåga och livskvalitet
- ☐ något annat / vet ej

Kommentar

9. Vad är det som orsakar eller bidrar till att du känner dig icke-/stressad på ditt jobb?

10. Vilka av de följande uttalanden skulle du uttryckligen instämma i?

(du kan välja flera)

- ☐ användaren utgör största prioriteten i vår verksamhet
- ☐ personalens arbetsmiljö tas aktivt hänsyn till från ledningen
- ☐ användarnas egentliga behov tas inte hänsyn till
- ☐ personalens välmående bortprioriteras
- ☐ personalens prestation i siffror läggs mycket vikt på
- ☐ konkreta prestationsresultat måste redovisas åtminstone en gång i månaden från personalens sida
- ☐ det är ont om tid varje vecka att utföra de mest centrala uppgifterna
- ☐ biblioteket är betydligt underbemannat
- ☐ biblioteket är underbemannat från en ideal synpunkt
- ☐ jag jobbar vidare även när jag egentligen är tjänstledig
- ☐ vår verksamhet lyckas hålla en balans av personalens och användarnas generella välmående

Kommentar

◀ << Föregående sida

1 2 3 4 5

Nästa sida >> ▶

11. Vilka styrkor har din arbetsmiljö med hänsyn till personligt hållbart och värde-centrerad arbete?
(Dvs. vilka omständigheter är bra och underlättar ditt välmående på jobbet?)

12. Vilka brister har din arbetsmiljö med hänsyn till personligt hållbart och värde-centrerad arbete?
(Dvs. vilka omständigheter är jobbiga och hindrar ditt välmående på jobbet?)

13. Baserad på de två senaste frågorna, vad väger tyngre för dig: är du generellt nöjd eller missnöjd med arbetsmiljön på din arbetsplats?
(om du tar allt i åtanke, även t.ex. hur besökare eller kollegor brukar påverka arbetsmiljön utöver institutionens ramvillkor)

- ☐ jag är generellt nöjd
- ☐ jag är väldigt nöjd
- ☐ jag är snarare missnöjd
- ☐ jag är väldigt missnöjd
- ☐ neutralt / vet ej

Kommentar

14. Vad önskar du var annorlunda på ditt jobb?
(önskan för bättre arbetsförutsättningar /-omständigheter; vad saknas eller behövs, materiellt eller socialt)

15. Vad tycker du att du och dina kollegor gör väl?
(för att upprätthålla en positiv arbetsmiljö och/eller en värdefull verksamhet)

◀ << Föregående sida

1 2 3 4 5

Nästa sida >> ▶

16. Jag använder begreppet 'slow librarianship' (SL) för alla praktiker som ingår i medvetet, värde-centrerat arbete som motstår neoliberala och enkelt mätbara prestationskrav.

Detta kan innebära bl.a. att man tar sig tid för varje användare man pratar med, för egen läs- och reflektionstid i arbetet, att man sätter tydliga gränser för sin arbetstid och sitt ansvar, och att man satsar på flera undervisningstillfällen med långsiktiga effekter istället för engångsmöten som inte tar hänsyn till användarnas individuella och faktiska behov.

Använder du dig av sådana långsamma och medvetna praktiker i din yrkesvardag? Om ja, vilka?
(kommentera även gärna hur detta bemöts från dina kollegor och ledningen)

17. Ser du ett behov för SL praktiker (se ovan) på ditt jobb? Om ja, i så fall vilka?

18. Är dina kollegor och chefer öppna för och stöttande av ditt användande av mer långsamma och medvetna arbetspraktiker?

19. Hur öppen är du själv för att anpassa din arbetspraktik till ett mer medvetet arbete? Hur bedömer du riskerna och fördelarna med det?

20. Ser du ett behov för SL praktiker och reflektioner i Sverige och det svenska biblioteksväsendet i stort?

(Om du tycker att den bibliotekariska arbetsmiljön i Sverige är generellt sett (mycket) bra, skriv gärna även det)

21. Har du några slutliga tankar du vill dela med dig av? Eller några tankar kring SL som koncept i sig?

◀ << Föregående sida

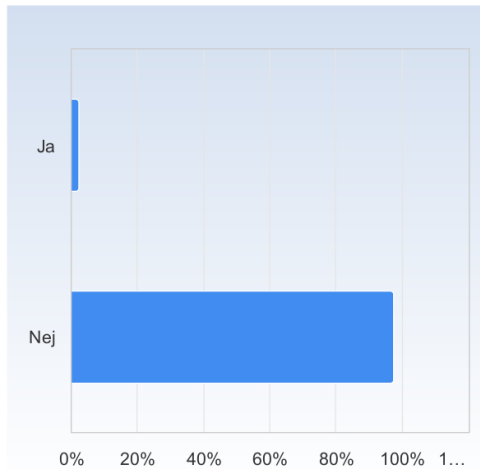
1 2 3 4 5

Skicka nu

6) Questionnaire graph results (generated by the survey tool Sunet):

Är du bekant med konceptet 'slow librarianship' från tidigare?

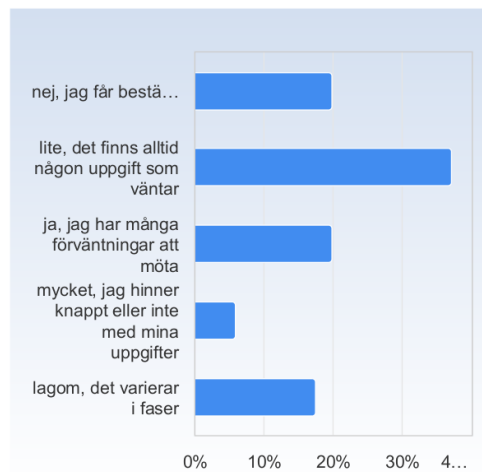
Är du bekant med konceptet 'slow librarianship' från tidigare?	Antal svar
Ja	2 (2,4%)
Nej	80 (97,6%)
Summa	82 (100,0%)



	Medelvärde	Standardavvikelse
Är du bekant med konceptet 'slow librarianship' från tidigare?	2,0	0,2

Känner du tidspress under ditt dagliga arbete?

Känner du tidspress under ditt dagliga arbete?	Antal svar
nej, jag får bestämma mycket av mitt arbetstempo själv	17 (21,0%)
lite, det finns alltid någon uppgift som väntar	32 (39,5%)
ja, jag har många förväntningar att möta	17 (21,0%)
mycket, jag hinner knappt eller inte med mina uppgifter	5 (6,2%)
lagom, det varierar i faser	15 (18,5%)
Summa	86 (106,2%)



	Medelvärde	Standardavvikelse
Känner du tidspress under ditt dagliga arbete?	2,6	1,3

Hur stressad känner du dig generellt på och med ditt jobb?

(utgående från din vardagliga upplevelse och direkt kopplad till din arbetsplats och dina uppgifter)

(kommentera gärna om du upplever ett stort glapp mellan objektiv och subjektiv upplevelse, t.ex. på grund av NPF, språkkunskaper, eller hög stresstolerans)

Hur stressad känner du dig generellt på och med ditt jobb?

(utgående från din vardagliga upplevelse och direkt kopplad till din arbetsplats och dina uppgifter)

(kommentera gärna om du upplever ett stort glapp mellan objektiv och subjektiv upplevelse, t.ex. på grund av NPF, språkkunskaper, eller hög stresstolerans)

	Antal svar
inte stressad alls, avslappnad	3 (3,7%)
ibland lite stressad, men det är snarare ett undantag	62 (76,5%)
ofta stressad, jag tycker mitt jobb är generellt stressigt	15 (18,5%)
väldigt ofta stressad, det påverkar min arbetsförmåga och livskvalitet	3 (3,7%)
något annat / vet ej	2 (2,5%)
Summa	85 (104,9%)



	Medelvärde	Standardavvikelse
Hur stressad känner du dig generellt på och med ditt jobb?		
(utgående från din vardagliga upplevelse och direkt kopplad till din arbetsplats och dina uppgifter)		
(kommentera gärna om du upplever ett stort glapp mellan objektiv och subjektiv upplevelse, t.ex. på grund av NPF, språkkunskaper, eller hög stresstolerans)	2,3	0,7

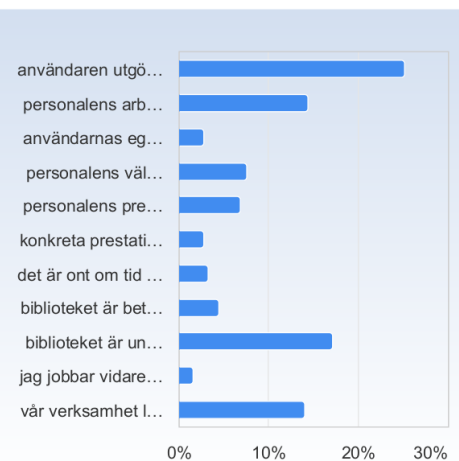
Vilka av de följande uttalanden skulle du uttryckligen instämma i?

(du kan välja flera)

Vilka av de följande uttalanden skulle du uttryckligen instämma i?

(du kan välja flera)

	Antal svar
användaren utgör största prioriteten i vår verksamhet	63 (77,8%)
personalens arbetsmiljö tas aktivt hänsyn till från ledningen	36 (44,4%)
användarnas egentliga behov tas inte hänsyn till	7 (8,6%)
personalens välmående bortprioriteras	19 (23,5%)
personalens prestation i siffror läggs mycket vikt på	17 (21,0%)
konkreta prestationsresultat måste redovisas åtminstone en gång i månaden från personalens sida	7 (8,6%)
det är ont om tid varje vecka att utföra de mest centrala uppgifterna	8 (9,9%)
biblioteket är betydligt underbemannat	11 (13,6%)
biblioteket är underbemannat från en ideal synpunkt	43 (53,1%)
jag jobbar vidare även när jag egentligen är tjänstledig	4 (4,9%)
vår verksamhet lyckas hålla en balans av personalens och användarnas generella välmående	35 (43,2%)
Summa	250 (308,6%)



	Medelvärde	Standardavvikelse
Vilka av de följande uttalanden skulle du <u>uttryckligen</u> instämma i?		
(du kan välja flera)	5,3	3,8

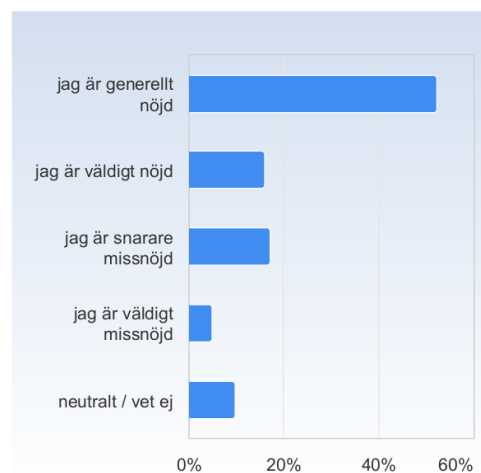
Baserad på de två senaste frågorna, vad väger tyngre för dig: är du generellt nöjd eller missnöjd med arbetsmiljön på din arbetsplats?

(om du tar allt i åtanke, även t.ex. hur besökare eller kollegor brukar påverka arbetsmiljön utöver institutionens ramvillkor)

Baserad på de två senaste frågorna, vad väger tyngre för dig: är du generellt nöjd eller missnöjd med arbetsmiljön på din arbetsplats?

(om du tar allt i åtanke, även t.ex. hur besökare eller kollegor brukar påverka arbetsmiljön utöver institutionens ramvillkor)

	Antal svar
jag är generellt nöjd	43 (53,1%)
jag är väldigt nöjd	13 (16,0%)
jag är snarare missnöjd	14 (17,3%)
jag är väldigt missnöjd	4 (4,9%)
neutralt / vet ej	8 (9,9%)
Summa	82 (101,2%)



	Medelvärde	Standardavvikelse
Baserad på de två senaste frågorna, vad väger tyngre för dig: är du generellt nöjd eller missnöjd med arbetsmiljön på din arbetsplats?		
(om du tar allt i åtanke, även t.ex. hur besökare eller kollegor brukar påverka arbetsmiljön utöver institutionens ramvillkor)	2,0	1,3