

THE STATE OF

ACADEMIC LIBRARIAN SPACES

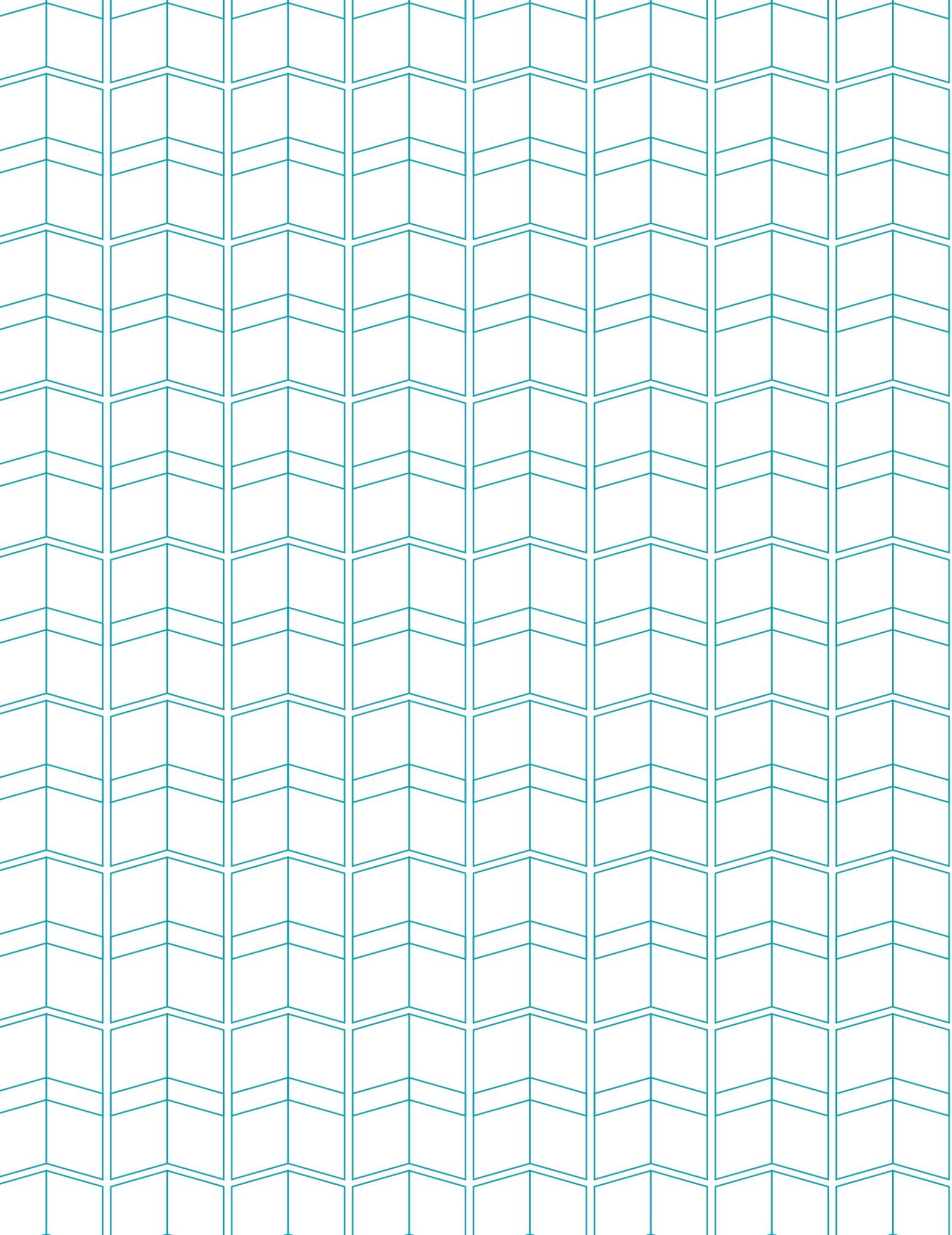
2015



In March 2015, Sasaki Associates, an interdisciplinary planning and design firm, asked academic librarians to respond to a 90-question survey about their responsibilities and the adequacy of their public-facing and private work spaces. While Sasaki Associates is a design firm that designs both public and academic library space, its interest in the state of academic librarians' spaces comes from a curiosity to better understand this unexplored topic. Indeed, after a literature review and discussions with library scholars, it became clear there is a dearth of literature and public discussion on the types of spaces librarians need to best support their changing responsibilities and their patrons' evolving needs.

This survey was made available to approximately 4,000 subscribers of the five American Library Association (ALA) listservs used, in addition to a smaller selection of direct appeals. Of that fairly wide pool, 402 librarians responded, representing at least 118 different institutions. The quantitative and qualitative analyses shared in this report provide insight into how academic librarians perceive their changing role and responsibilities, as well as how well their work environments suit these changes. Some of the findings from this survey, such as relationships between what areas of the library appear to be priorities for renovation and what areas are actually renovated, were surprising; others, such as librarians' interest in being close and available to patrons, or expanding their education/classroom spaces, were less so. This survey sought to facilitate a productive and proactive discussion on the topic of the physical landscape of academic librarians' workspaces.

[Check out the survey results at librarysurvey.sasaki.com](http://librarysurvey.sasaki.com)



By now it is old news in academic circles that libraries are rapidly metamorphosing from dull book boxes into dynamic and vibrant centers of academic inquiry. We have moved through an era when the demise of the academic library was widely predicted, and into an era that places it at the heart of the academic experience. “Academic hub,” “learning commons,” “interactive learning center”—universities are frequently attaching these titles to the campus building that used to be known, simply, as “the library” in an effort to more accurately reflect the dynamic collaboration at the heart of today’s library experience. New activities and programs are being brought into the library, creating a hybrid building that is part digital/print media center, part classroom building, and part student center. Likewise, an enormous amount of literature examines the impact of these changes on collection management and student study spaces.

What is curious is that not much discussion has focused on what all these changes mean for the individuals at the epicenter of all this change: the librarians. This is ironic because, as libraries change and evolve, staff spaces are becoming more important than ever. These spaces are changing in a myriad of ways, often informally and without a strategic focus.

Older buildings tend to have more rigid staff spaces, often cobbled together to meet changing needs. New buildings tend to repeat many of the shortcomings of previous generation buildings.

Modern academic librarians are working in these intensely changing environments. Many things have contributed to this situation, but two components are significant: staffing and organizational structure, and flexible and innovative library spaces. This changing environment offers many opportunities for libraries to become increasingly relevant and innovative. As library collections become more and more digitized, enabling user access 24/7 from anywhere in the world, it is interesting to note that physical library buildings remain critical and central to the library’s services. While in the past, physical library buildings had to function as vaults to protect valuable collections, technologies and building materials have enabled open, airy, flexible spaces for study, reflection, and collaboration. These organizational and physical changes represent many challenges and opportunities for the staff of academic libraries. The impetus for this survey was to gain a deeper understanding of how library staff interact with and respond to their work spaces.



RESPONDENT INFORMATION

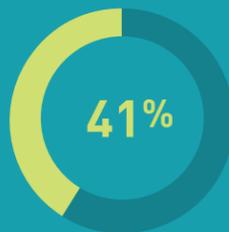
"Spaces matter. Design, good or bad, has an impact on the entire library effectiveness and ability to fulfill its mission."

INSTITUTION DEMOGRAPHICS

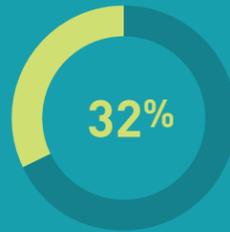
Institutions represented by the respondents range broadly in their purpose and focus, but they all have a library that serves as a central place for students, faculty, and visiting scholars to explore and engage information in a variety of forms. Understanding the types of institutions represented by this survey's respondents is useful in readers identifying similarities and differences in comparing their own institution's conditions and experiences.

STUDENT TYPE

Just as important as the institution type and size is the type of students a library is supporting. Of the 79% of respondents who answered the question about their student type, 41% indicated primarily residential students and 32% indicated primarily commuter students.



41%
 PRIMARILY RESIDENTIAL
 (130 respondents)



32%
 PRIMARILY COMMUTER
 (100 respondents)



23%
 EQUALLY RESIDENTIAL AND COMMUTER
 (71 respondents)



4%
 OTHER
 (14 respondents)



167
 PUBLIC

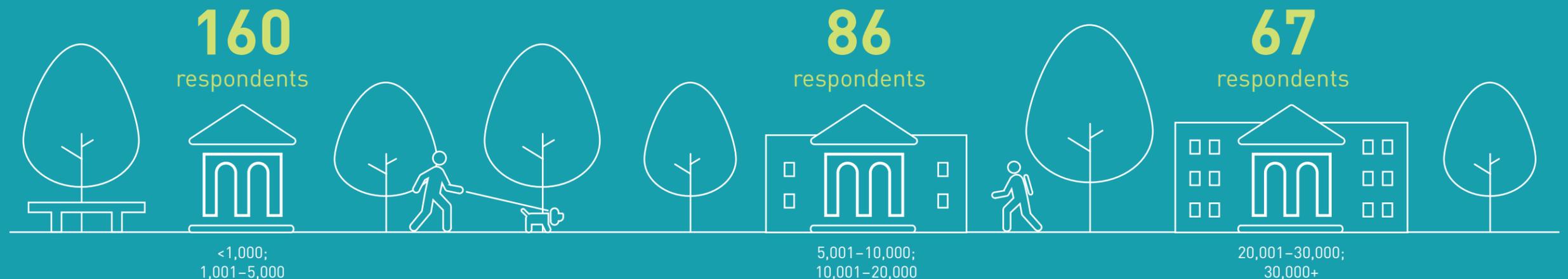


146
 PRIVATE

78% of respondents identified their institution type as either public or private. Of those responses, public institutions had a slight majority of **53%** of respondents, to **47%** identified as private institutions. **22%** of respondents did not provide an answer to this question.

INSTITUTION SIZE

Respondents to the question of institution size were offered six size range choices, which have been condensed into three larger groupings. The smallest institution size (<5,000 students) represents 43% of the respondents who answered this question. Of that significant segment of the response group, 84% identified themselves as having between 1,001-5,000 students. The largest institution size (20,000+ students) also disproportionately represents its larger institution size (30,000+), which makes up 60% of the respondents for this grouping.

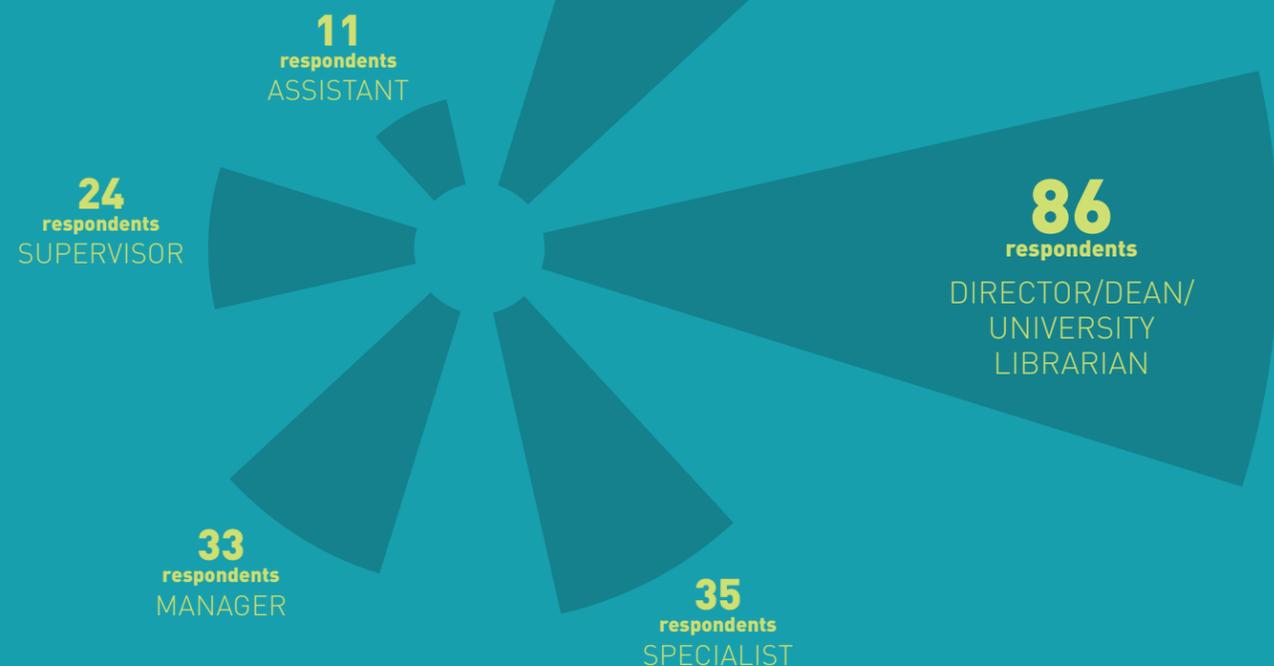


LIBRARIAN DEMOGRAPHICS

In addition to learning about the institutions represented by respondents, several questions were asked about the respondents themselves. This section breaks down how respondents identified to questions related to their titles and experience. Similar to institutional demographics, the following information provides valuable context into the perspectives of respondents' responses to the rest of the survey.

CURRENT POSITION TITLES

"Other" makes up 45% of the responses to this question. 21% of the "other" responses indicated their positions were reference related, while 14% expressed their position as Librarian, and 8% indicated their roles focused on Instruction. The survey design team incorrectly assumed that librarian was too vague an option for the title question, which proved to be a learning moment during analysis as so many respondents demonstrated this was their preferred and/or appropriate title. The second most selected position was Dean/Director, 27% of which have been at their present institution for fewer than four years.



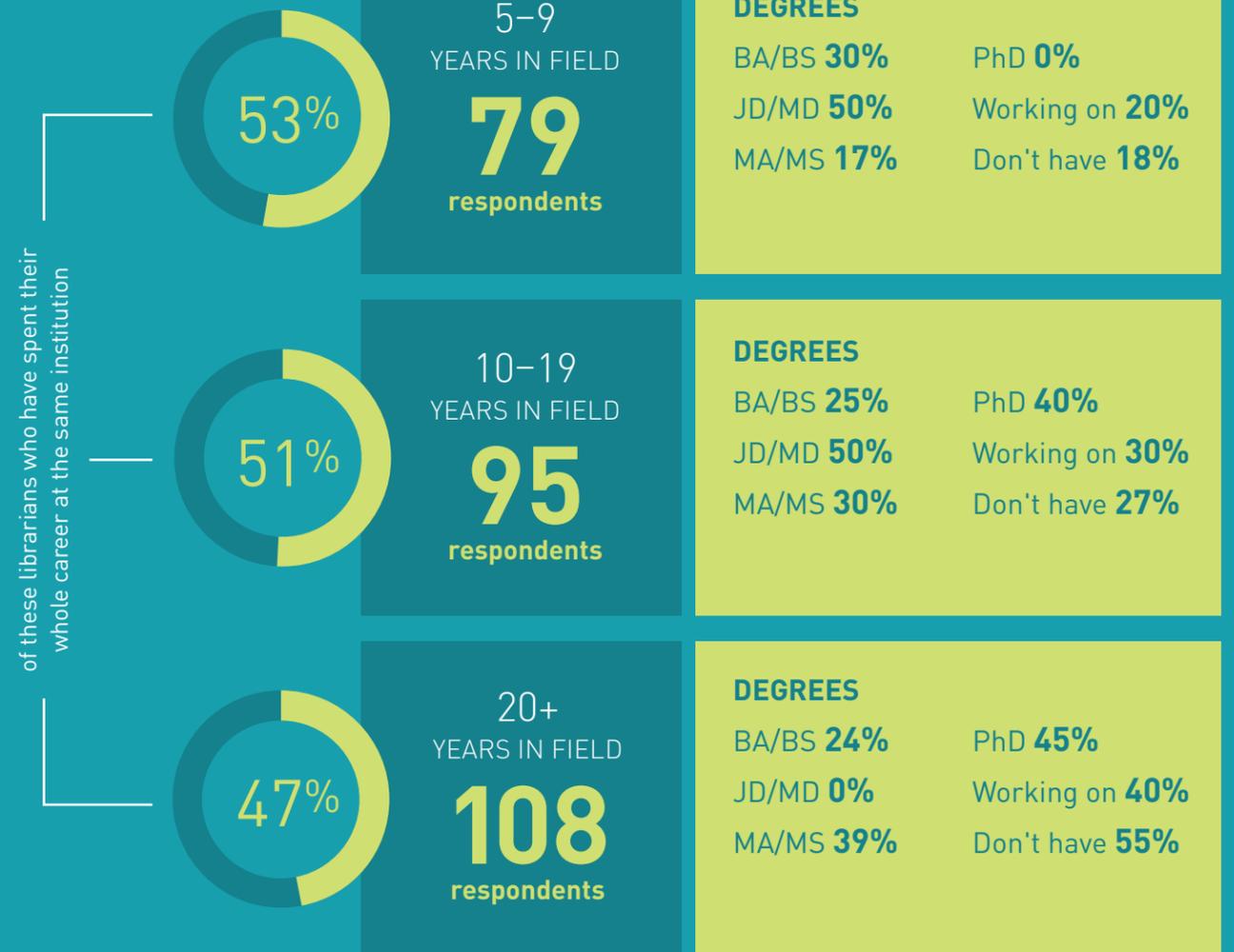
156
respondents
OTHER
Reference: **21%**
Librarian: **14%**
Instruction: **8%**

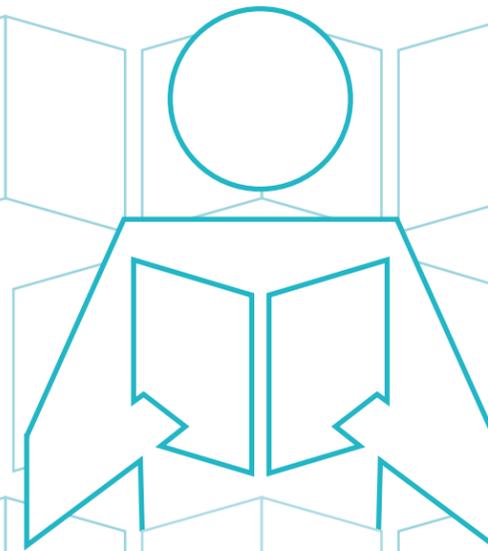
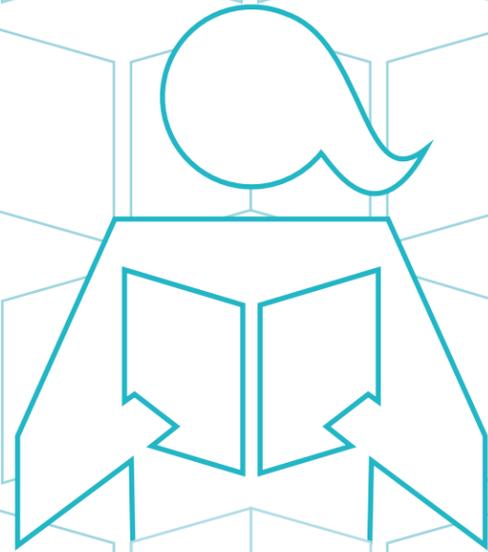
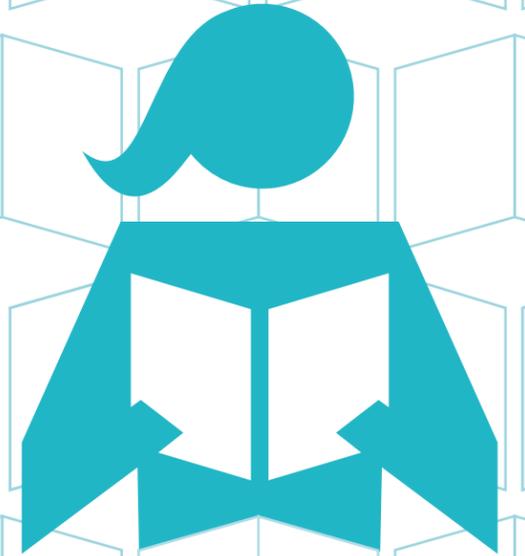
YEARS IN THE FIELD

Although the master's in library and information science has become a degree with ever increasing popularity, recent graduates (0-4 years of experience) make up only 17% of our respondents working in academic librarians. This seems a paltry percentage in comparison to the 62% of respondents with over 10 years of experience. Over 50% of all respondents who have been in the field for over 5 years have remained at their current institution for the majority of their career.

ADDITIONAL DEGREES

Academic libraries have a reputation for preferring their staff to have relevant subject matter knowledge. While the MLIS has become an almost ubiquitous requirement for professional librarians, it is interesting to see significant portion of respondents (35%) indicate they have additional master's, doctoral, and/or professional degrees. There was no apparent correlation between years of experience and respondents with additional degrees.





LIBRARIAN PROFILE

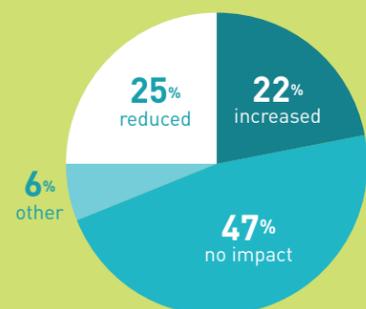
"From the get-go, any librarians hired wear multiple hats."

THE MODERN LIBRARIAN

As libraries, both academic and public, continue to evolve, librarians have continued to adapt to their patrons' needs and expectations. This section reviews how librarians have incorporated a multitude of responsibilities into their traditional positions and embraced their capacity as polymath professionals.

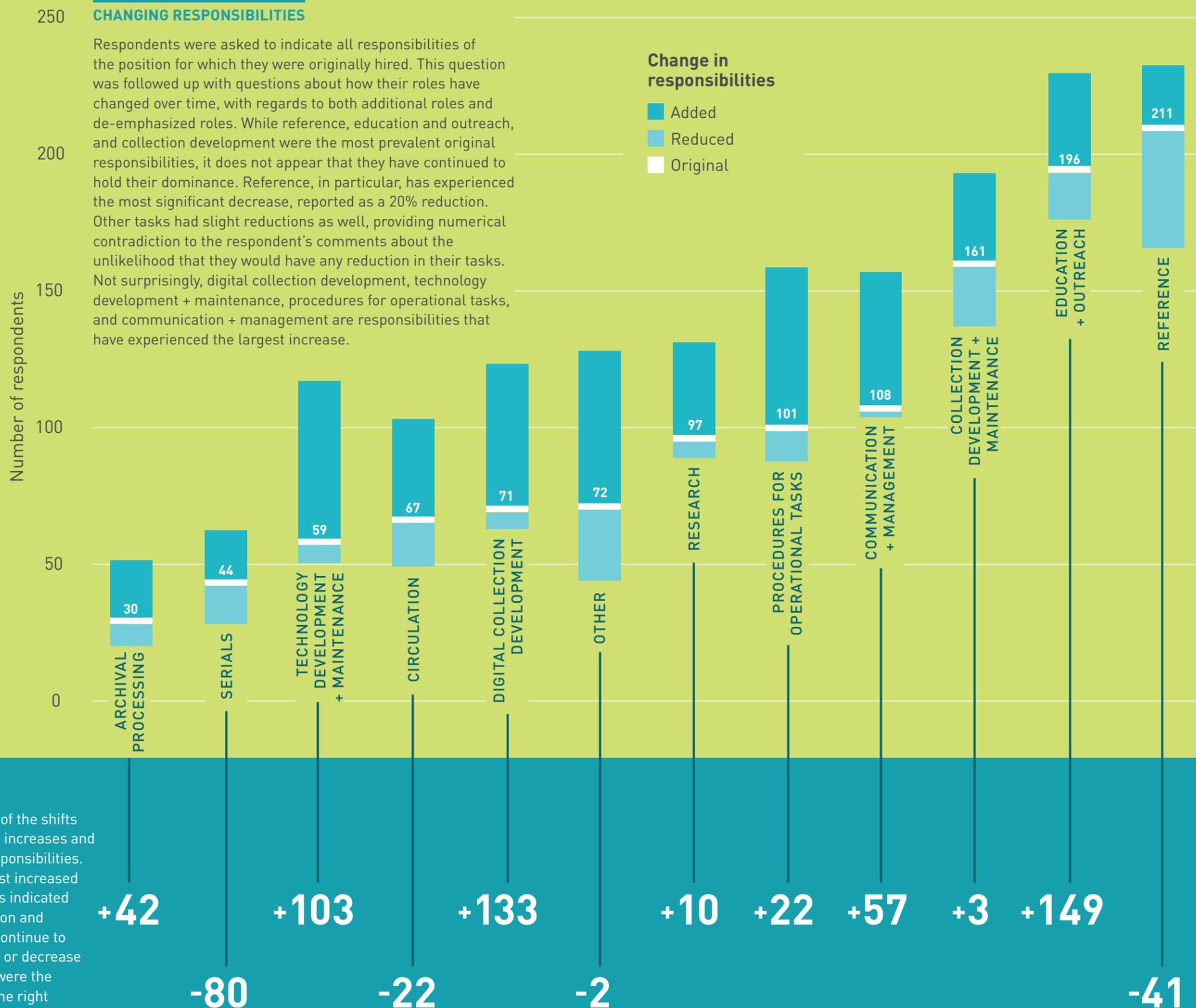
CHANGED ACCESS TO PATRONS

Despite the wide range of changes in responsibilities and institutional investment, half the respondents (47%) indicated their access to patrons was not impacted; however, the other half (47%) indicated they experienced an increase in access (22%) or a reduction (25%).



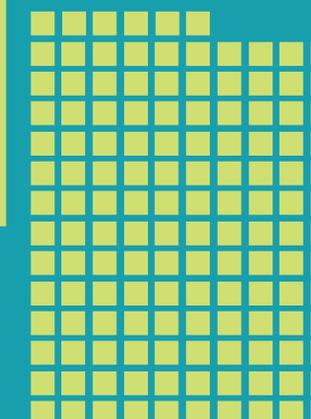
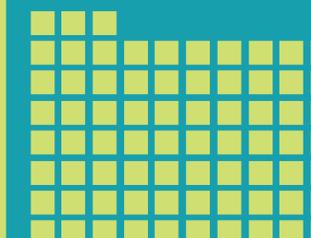
CHANGING INSTITUTIONAL INVESTMENTS

As changing responsibilities are a clear indicator of the shifts within the academic library profession, so are the increases and decreases of institutional investment in those responsibilities. For the most part, the areas representing the most increased investments align with the areas that respondents indicated had been added on to their original roles. Education and outreach proved to be the outlier, as institutions continue to invest heavily in this without any notable increase or decrease in this activity. Meanwhile, serials and reference were the most heavily disinvested areas. The numbers to the right indicate the increase or decrease in investment in the various responsibilities reported by respondents.



EXPECTED TECHNOLOGICAL INVESTMENT

Not surprisingly, many of the respondents expect their institutions to increase their investments in technology over the next five years. The number of respondents that expect a stagnant investment (35% of respondents to this question, or 18% of the entire respondent pool) is significant. Having failed to include follow up questions to this topic, we cannot deduce any clear reason for this group's forecast.



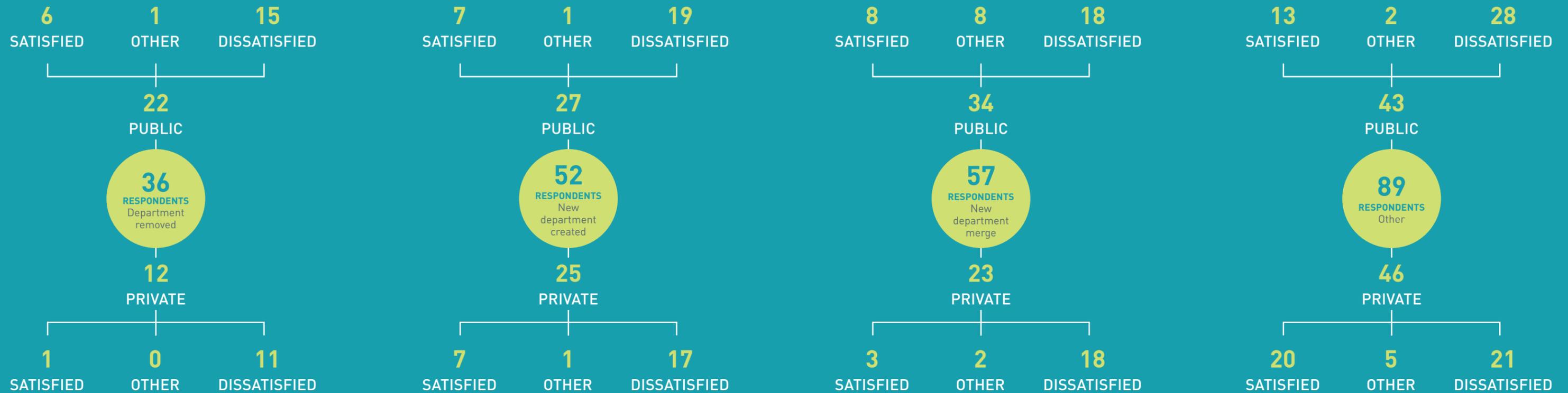
HYBRID ROLE MATRIX

Respondents were asked to identify what responsibilities made up the hybrid roles their institutions have developed. The responses displayed here reflect a larger portion of the respondents than those that indicated that their institutions have intentionally hybrid roles—a clear signal that hybrid roles are prevalent within libraries, regardless of what a title may imply. As a result of the question’s formatting, you will notice there are duplicate pairings. While there are 13 emphasized boxes, through identifying heavily selected responsibility pairings, there are actually only 9 unique pairings that are indicated with different colored text.

| | CIRCULATION | REFERENCE | TECHNOLOGY | EDUCATION | SERIALS | COMMUNICATION | COLLECTION | RESEARCH | PROCEDURES | ARCHIVAL | DIGITAL LIBRARY | TOTAL |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------|------------|-----------|---------|---------------|------------|----------|------------|----------|-----------------|-------|
| CIRCULATION | 6 | 23 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 58 |
| REFERENCE | 26 | 2 | 14 | 24 | 4 | 0 | 11 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 92 |
| TECHNOLOGY | 9 | 16 | 2 | 12 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 55 |
| EDUCATION | 2 | 28 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 57 |
| SERIALS | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 24 |
| COMMUNICATION | 1 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 0 | 2 | 27 |
| COLLECTION | 0 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 19 | 54 |
| RESEARCH | 1 | 8 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 |
| PROCEDURES | 3 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 14 |
| ARCHIVAL | 2 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 16 |
| DIGITAL LIBRARY | 0 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 14 | 1 | 3 | 15 | 1 | 51 |
| TOTAL | 55 | 89 | 54 | 52 | 44 | 15 | 43 | 16 | 26 | 25 | 42 | |

LIBRARY STAFF CHANGES

It is widely accepted that librarians in all types of libraries have experienced changes in their roles and responsibilities over time. Many of these changes are due to technological advancements and changing user needs, while others are more subtle shifts of focus. Having looked at the granular changes respondents have experienced in their roles, we explored other major indicators of professional changes: titles, promotions, and staffing size.

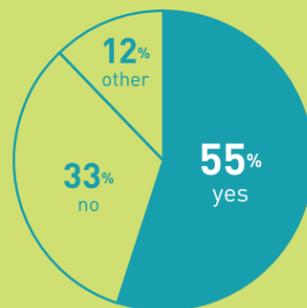


STAFF ORGANIZATION CHANGES IN LAST 10 YEARS

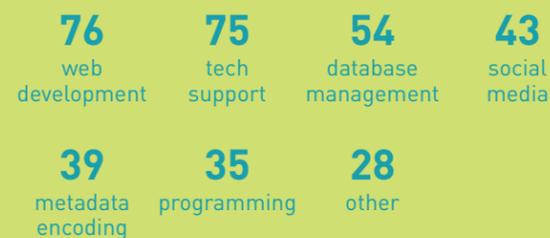
Over the last 10 years, our respondents have experienced both changes in their personal roles and titles as well as in their institution's staff organization. While either the development of new departments or the merging/removal of existing departments make up a fair amount of these organizational changes, the "other" option proved most helpful for respondents to provide details about their institution's specific changes. Most frequently, respondents clarified that their institutions have either lost positions, have had existing staff take on additional responsibilities (whether related to lost positions or not), or the organization has remained the same, even if the people serving in those roles may have changed.

TECH SAVVY HIRING FOCUS

Technical know-how, digital services, and metadata were mentioned throughout the survey's questions that focused on changing roles and responsibilities of librarians. This was further supported by 55% of respondents indicating that their institutions have increased the hiring of technologically- savvy staff.

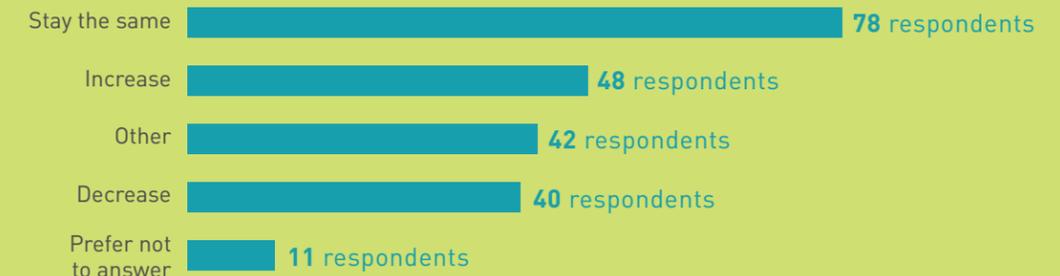


According to our respondents, general technical support and web development were the most demanded skills.



FUTURE STAFFING CHANGES

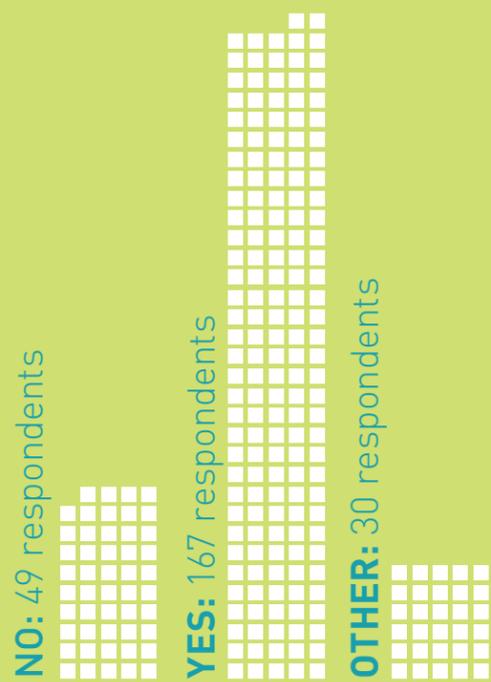
When asked if respondents foresaw any staffing changes in the next 10 years, 36% indicated they expected their staff organization to remain the same, while an optimistic 22% anticipated an increase in their staff's size.



“We are a small staff and a large student staff. We all wear many hats and, outside of administrative duties, everyone shares various responsibilities.”

ROLES & TITLE CHANGES IN LAST 10 YEARS

When asked if the roles and titles of the respondent’s library’s staff has changed over the past 10 years, 68% of the respondents to this question said yes. Many of the responses indicated that changes in their roles or titles were due to the development of new digital services and electronic resources positions, shifts towards metadata (and away from cataloging), and an emphasis on outreach and educational roles. Additionally, many noted a decreasing staff size and a rise in part-time employees.



STAFF PROFILE BY INSTITUTION SIZE

As expected, there is a clear correlation between institution size and the number of full-time and part-time students. Student workers were less consistently connected to the institution size, and there was no noticeable trend between student workers and institution type (public or private) within each respective institution size category.





LIBRARY PROFILE

“At the time the tutoring function was combined with the library—a fact which neither director wanted. It is great for students though, and great for library traffic.”

SHARED SPACE

Many libraries have begun to take on alternative names, such as learning, information, or academic commons. As these names imply, many libraries are inviting other programming, academically oriented or otherwise, into their physical space. The survey focused on the academic enrichment programs incorporated into existing library spaces; although several respondents indicated the library was also becoming home to maker spaces and other technology-oriented services.

WRITING CENTER
128
respondents



TUTORING CENTER
104
respondents



MATH CENTER
33
respondents



LANGUAGE LAB
7
respondents



OTHER
114
respondents



NONE
107
respondents



1
respondent
WRITING + LANGUAGE



1
respondent
LANGUAGE + OTHER



1
respondent
MATH + OTHER



1
respondent
TUTORING + NONE



2
respondents
TUTORING + WRITING + LANGUAGE



2
respondents
OTHER + NONE



3
respondents
MATH



3
respondents
TUTORING + WRITING + MATH



3
respondents
TUTORING + WRITING + LANGUAGE + MATH



4
respondents
WRITING + MATH + OTHER



5
respondents
TUTORING + OTHER



7
respondents
TUTORING + WRITING + MATH + OTHER



12
respondents
TUTORING + WRITING + MATH



16
respondents
WRITING + OTHER



20
respondents
TUTORING + WRITING



21
respondents
TUTORING



27
respondents
WRITING



33
respondents
TUTORING + WRITING + OTHER



45
respondents
OTHER



104
respondents
NO SHARED SPACE

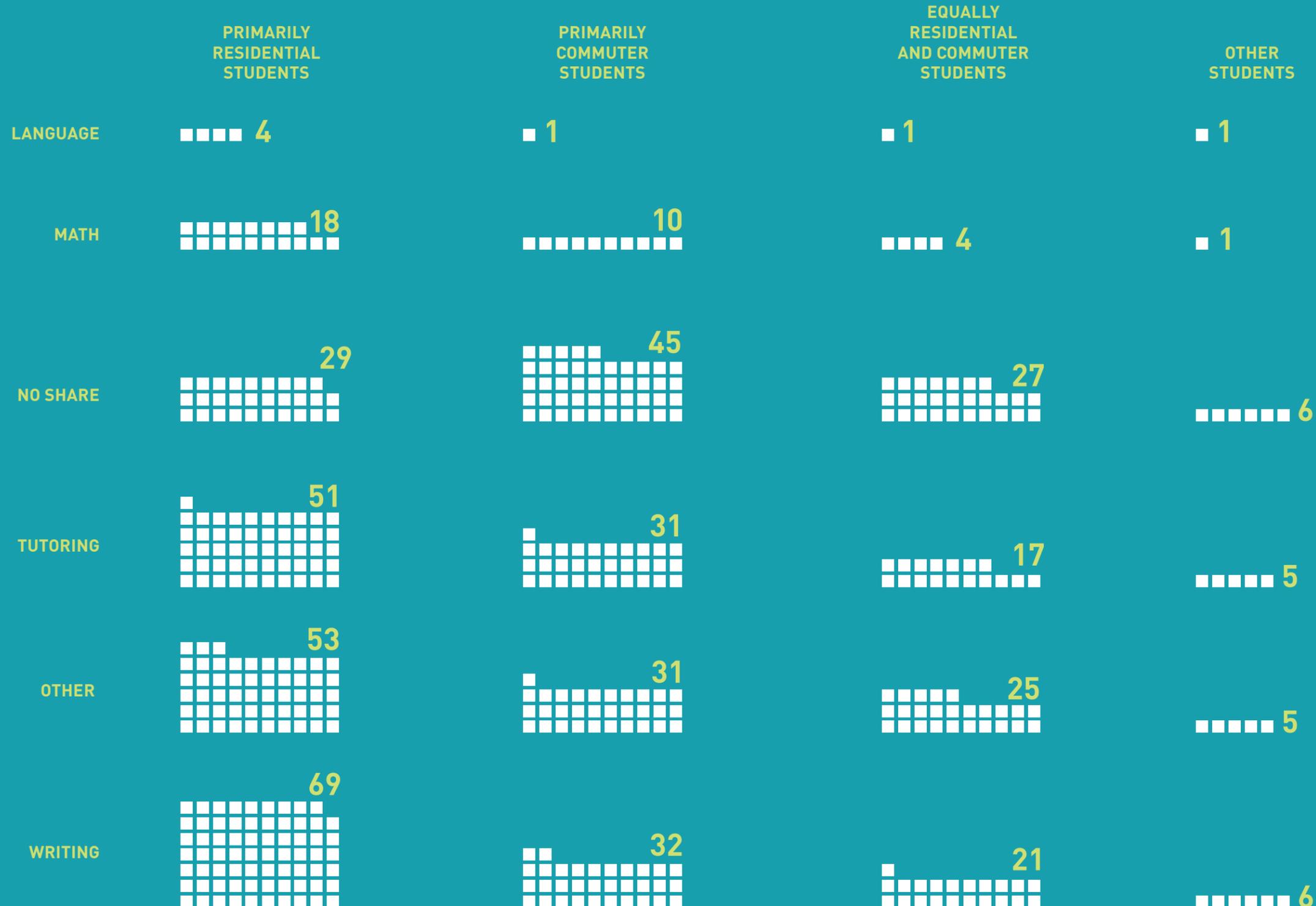
ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Writing centers and “other” were consistently the first or second most selected answers. The “other” category predominantly represents some type of technology support or media center (30%, 31%, and 29% respectively for small, medium, and large institutions), or a space for special programs (Honors courses) or special subject research centers (7%, 19%, and 17% respectively for small, medium, and large institutions). Career services, for students and faculty alike, was another service with which libraries are sharing their spaces (7%, 8%, and 8% respectively for small, medium, and large institutions).

Only 11% of the respondents anticipated adding a shared space in the future.

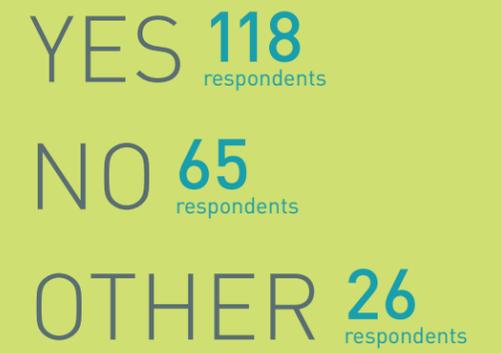
SHARED SPACES BY STUDENT TYPE

Libraries serving a primarily residential student body consistently share their spaces more often than campuses of primarily commuter or mixed student type. This was not elucidated by the respondent's comments, but is an interesting observation about the campus layout serving varying student types.



FUTURE PARTNERSHIPS

30% of the respondents anticipate a new department or partnership will develop within their library's existing space.



“[We] want this to be a collaborative arrangement, not just another tenant in our building like the other departments who have moved in over the past 20 years.”

SHARED SPACE BY INSTITUTION SIZE

When respondents were asked to identify all other services their library shared space with, 27% of the total response group said their library's space was their own. The other 73% indicated they are sharing their space with typically one or two academic enrichment programs. Knowing the majority of libraries of all institution sizes are sharing their spaces is critical in understanding the changing landscape of space and services that libraries are expected to support.

Larger institutions were the least likely to share their library's space with an enrichment program, while small-sized institutions were the most likely. Although shared library spaces cannot be definitively correlated to institutional space and resources, it is highly plausible that larger campuses may have the spatial capacity to afford these programs having their own facilities.

- TUTORING
- WRITING
- LANGUAGE
- MATH
- OTHER

NUMBER OF SHARED SPACES

1

2

3

4

5



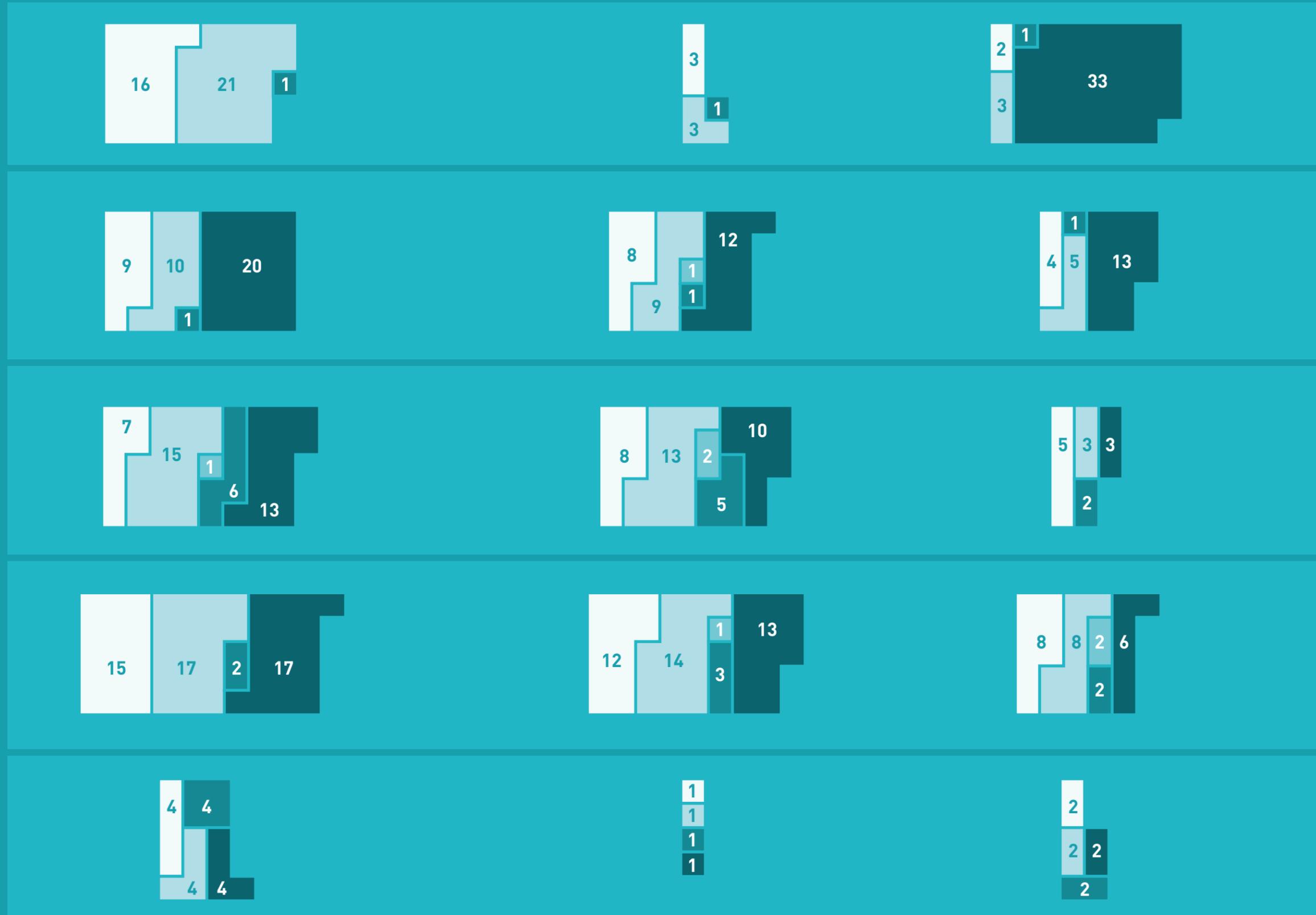
160
respondents
<1,000;
1,001-5,000



86
respondents
5,001-10,000;
10,001-20,000



67
respondents
20,001-30,000;
30,000+



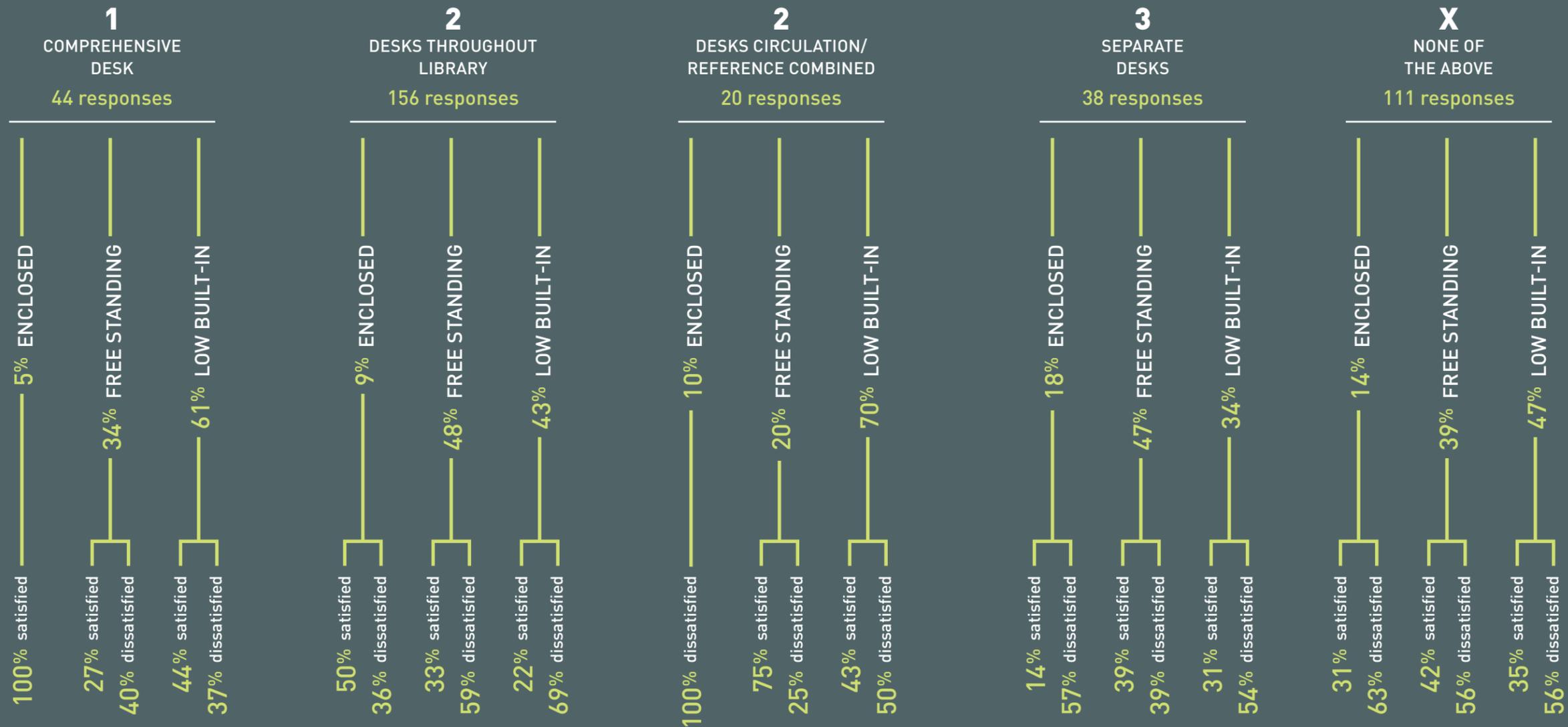


PUBLIC DESKS

“The reference desk feels like a fortress. People aren't super clear where to go when they first walk in—us or circulation.”

PUBLIC DESK CONFIGURATIONS

The survey offered four common public desk configurations within libraries, as well as the option for “other” utilized to describe alternative configurations. Selected by 35% of the respondents, the most common desk layout was two separate desks positioned throughout library, which also had the highest satisfaction ranking of 46%. “Other” was a close second, selected by 33% of respondents, of which 90% indicated their configurations consisted of three or less desks.



SATISFACTION BY DESK TYPE

Low built-in desks were the most common desk style regardless of desk configuration selected, with a significant variation in levels of satisfaction ranging from 21-78% satisfaction, and an average of 29% satisfaction. “The enclosed desk” was consistently the least selected style regardless of desk configuration, but had multiple instances of 100% satisfaction, and never lower than 33% satisfaction.

Low built-in desk with adjacent shelving were the most common desk style regardless of desk configuration selected, with a significant variation in levels of satisfaction ranging from 21-78%, and an average of 29% satisfaction. The free-standing desk with reference stacks available is a close second, representing 41% of the desk types used by respondents. These respondents are most consistently dissatisfied with this desk type, averaging 44% dissatisfaction. The least selected style regardless of desk configuration, was the enclosed desk with front opening and reference stacks available. The minimal presence of this desk type in academic libraries maybe be explained by its average dissatisfaction percentage of 51%.

DESK CONFIGURATION BY INSTITUTION TYPE

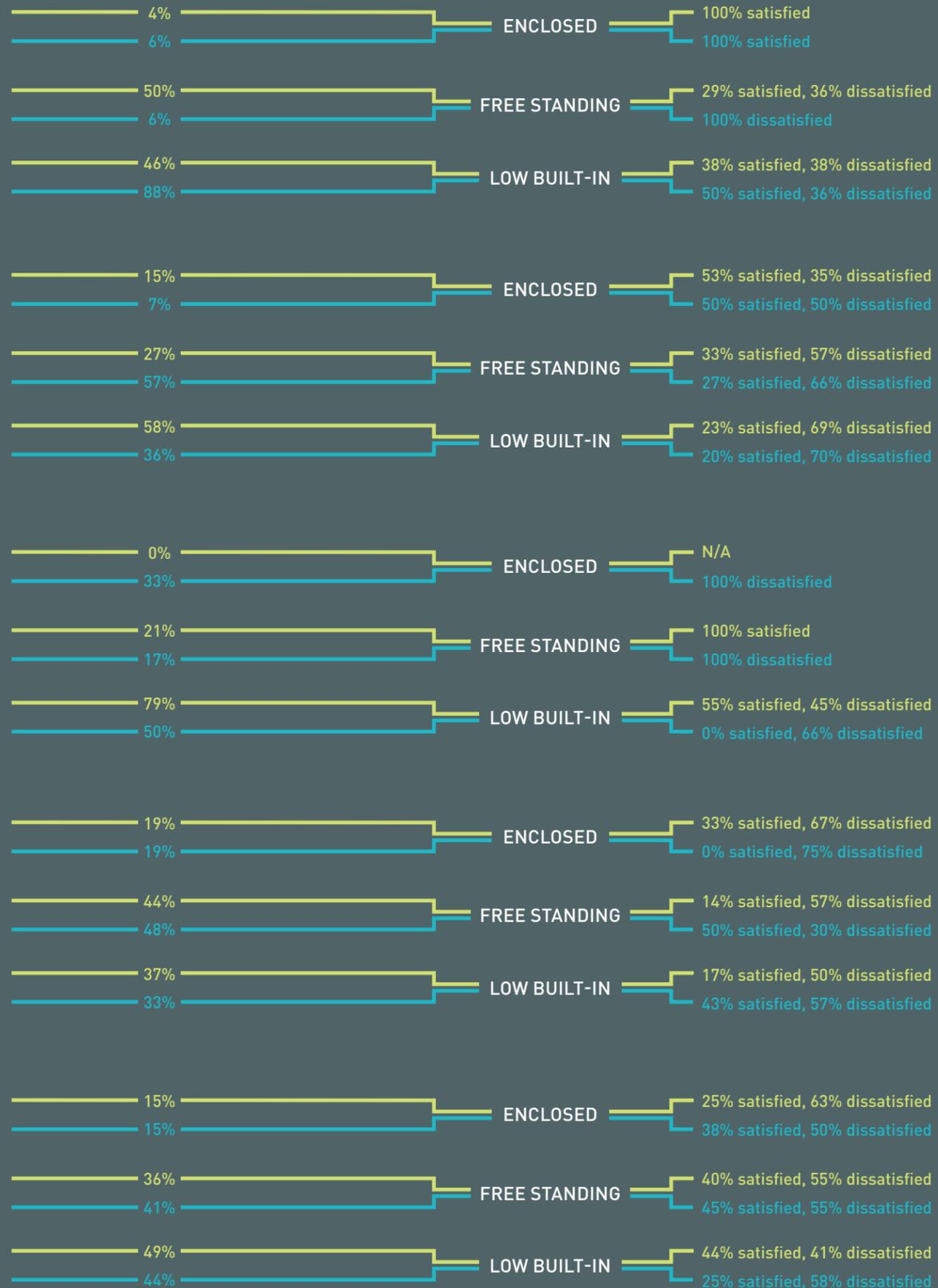
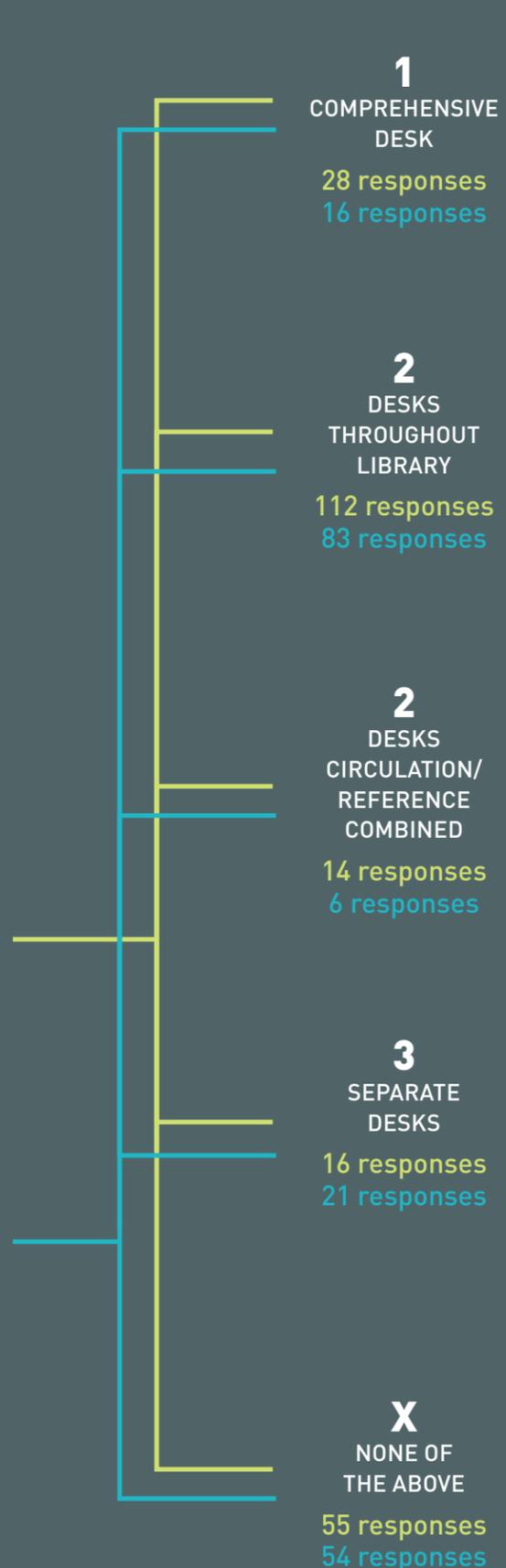
Public and private institutions have a similar trend of desk-type prevalence; both have over 50% low built-in desks, with over 30% free-standing desks, and approximately 10% enclosed desks. This consistency does not persist for satisfaction levels by desk configuration or for desk type.



PUBLIC



PRIVATE



This desk configuration makes up 17% of public and 10% of private institutions. Half of public institutions with this desk type have a freestanding desk, with a very low satisfaction level of 29%. The majority of private institutions have a low built-in desk and 50% satisfaction.

This is the most popular desk configuration for public and private institutions alike. Overall satisfaction for both institution types is low, averaging 32% and 36% for private and public institutions respectively.

This is the least popular desk configuration regardless of institution type. Private institutions were predominantly dissatisfied with this desk configuration no matter the desk type present. Public institutions are in direct inverse of their private counterparts, with an average of 78% satisfaction.

Public and private institutions have similar breakdowns of desk type used as well as satisfaction levels with these desk types. This desk configuration, making up only 12% of total responses, is the most consistently experienced between public and private institutions.

Without any significant difference in desk style chosen, public institutions with a desk configuration of "none of the above" were consistently more satisfied with their desk style than their counterparts at private institutions. 89% of public and 91% of private institution respondents indicated that their configurations consisted of 3 or fewer desks.

DESK CONFIGURATION BY INSTITUTION SIZE

Medium-sized institutions reported most consistent satisfaction with their desk styles as a mixture of enclosed and low built-in desk types. The larger institutions were the least satisfied overall with their desk styles, regardless of the style or the desk configuration matching. All institutions supported the initial observation of the predominance of the low built-in desk type.



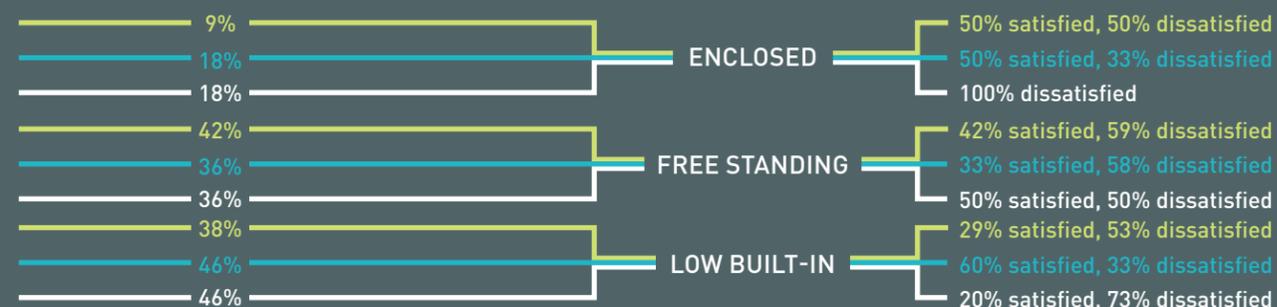
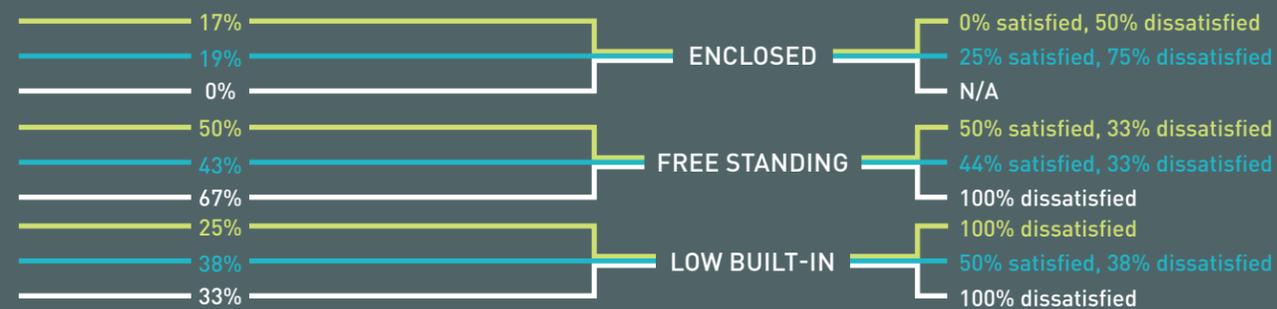
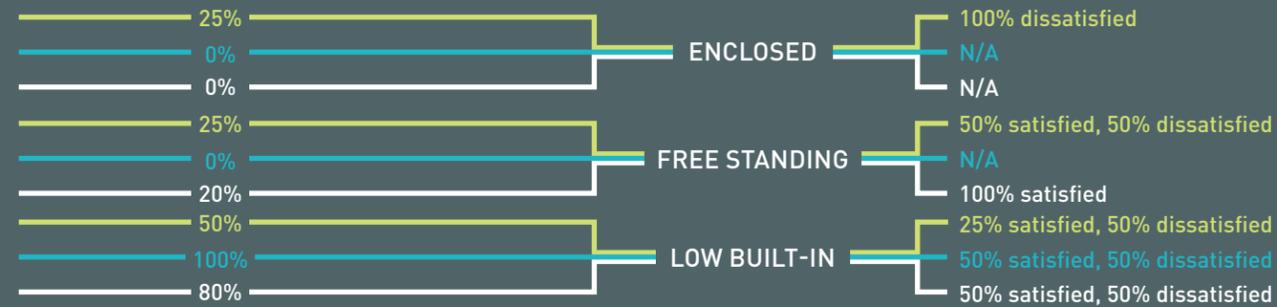
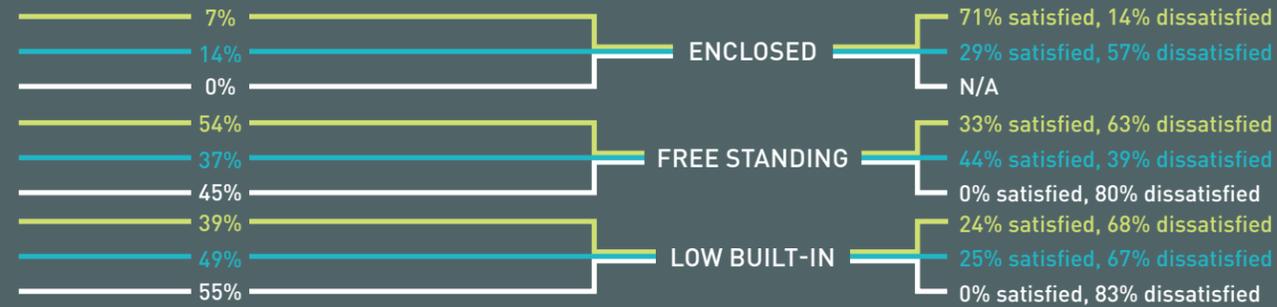
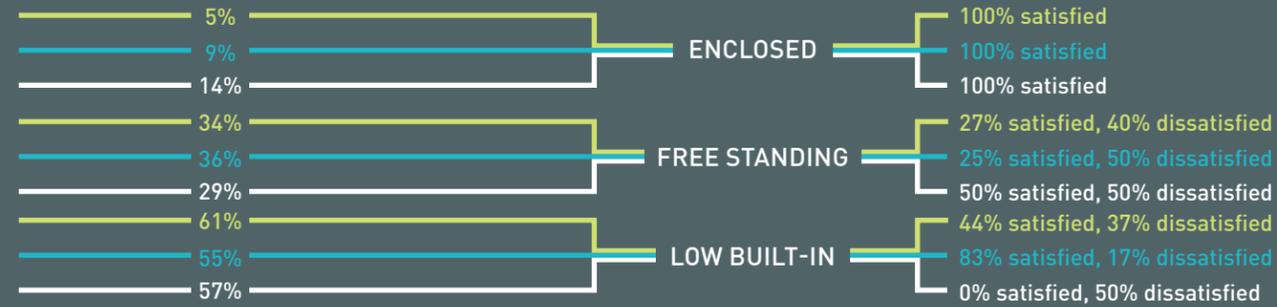
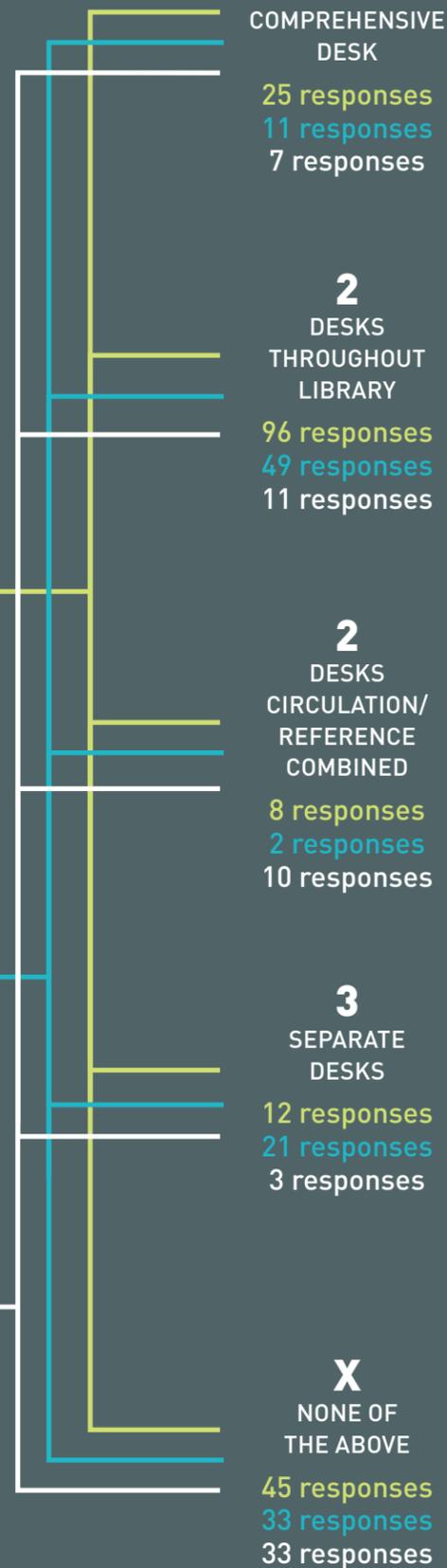
INSTITUTION SIZE
<1,000;
1,001-5,000



INSTITUTION SIZE
5,001-10,000;
10,001-20,000



INSTITUTION SIZE
20,001-30,000;
30,000+



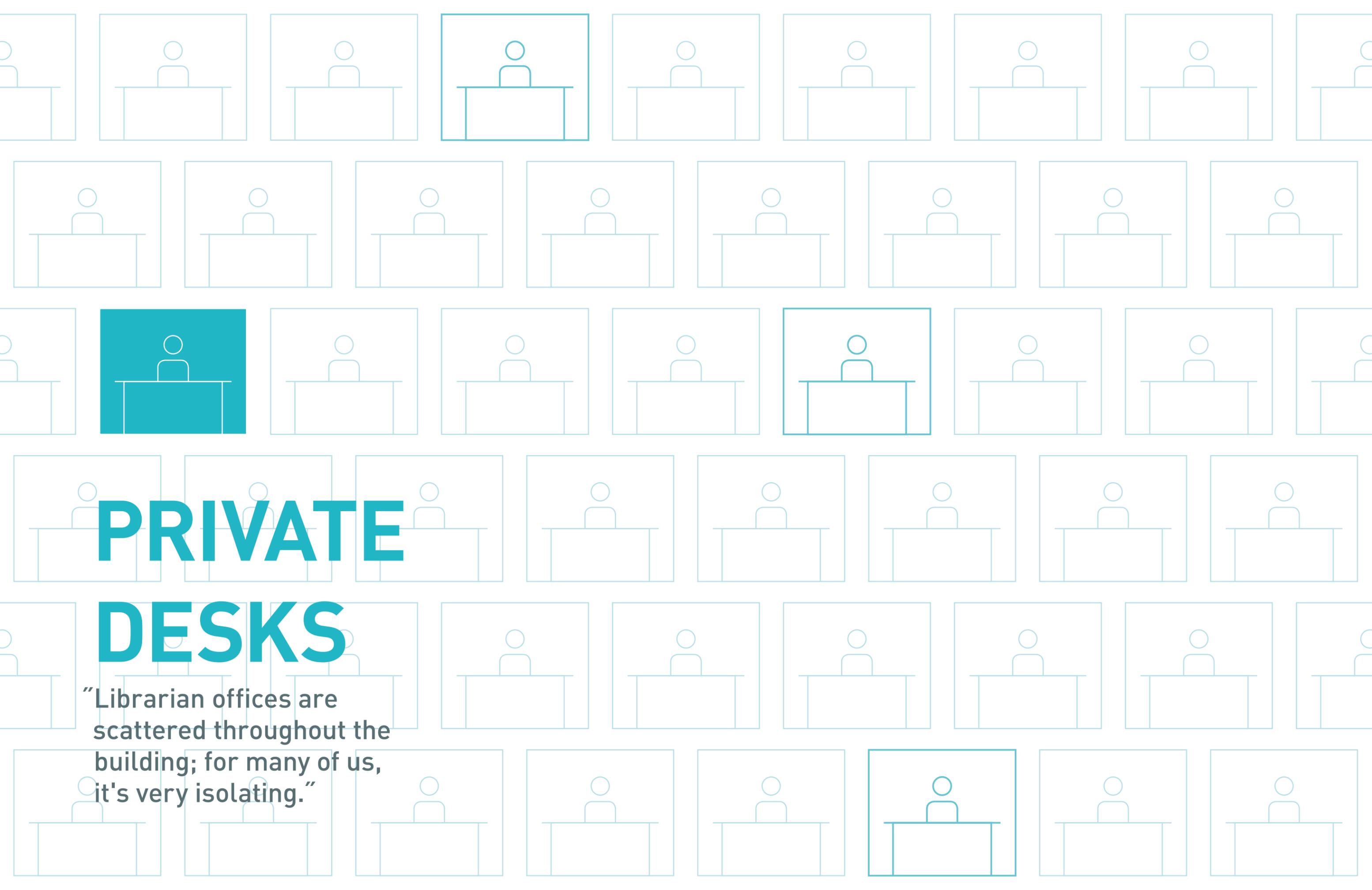
Although enclosed desk type is the least prevalent, it has consistent 100% satisfaction for all institution sizes. This is particularly impressive given the significant disparity of satisfaction levels for freestanding and low built-in desks amongst the three institutions sizes.

Low built-in and freestanding desk types are most prevalent for this desk configuration amongst the three institution sizes. All but freestanding desks for medium-sized institutions have a satisfaction level of 33% or less; the exception has a satisfaction rank of 44%. Small-sized institutions with enclosed desks, a very small group, has the highest level of satisfaction of 71%.

As observed on the previous page about desk configuration and types by institution type, this is the least satisfactory and least popular desk configuration for small and medium sized institution types. Dissatisfaction for all desk types is 50% or more, with the exception of the large-sized institutions with freestanding desks, which reported a 100% satisfaction level.

Low built-in desks are the least satisfactory of the desk type for this desk configuration for all institution sizes; save for medium-sized institutions, which reported enclosed desks to be the least satisfactory for them.

100% of small-sized institution, 94% of medium-sized institution, and 75% of large-sized institution respondents indicated their configurations consisted of three or fewer desks. Small and large-sized institutions were consistently more dissatisfied than satisfied regardless of their desk type used. Medium-sized institutions were more satisfied than not with their use of enclosed desks and low built-in desks, while only 33% were satisfied with freestanding desks.



PRIVATE DESKS

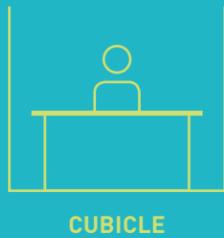
“Librarian offices are scattered throughout the building; for many of us, it's very isolating.”

ACCESSIBILITY TO THE PUBLIC EYE

Respondents were equally concerned about the accessibility of their private-facing work spaces as they were with that of their public-facing desks. They hold strong opinions on the need to be physically accessible, rather than relying on technology-aided access, for their patrons. Despite this emphasis, 59% of respondents indicated their private workspaces are out of the public eye. Private institutions, as well as smaller institutions, have the most visible private work spaces, exceeding that of public and larger institution sizes by more than 20%.



42
respondents



49
respondents



181
respondents



37
respondents

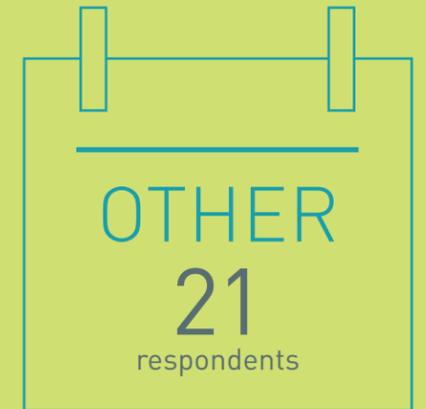
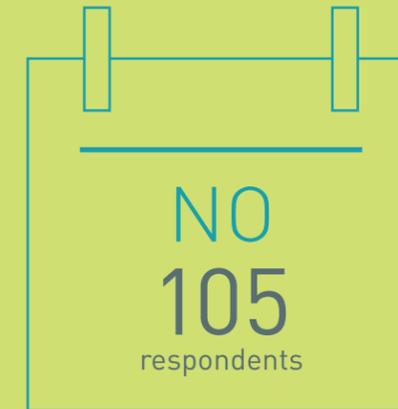
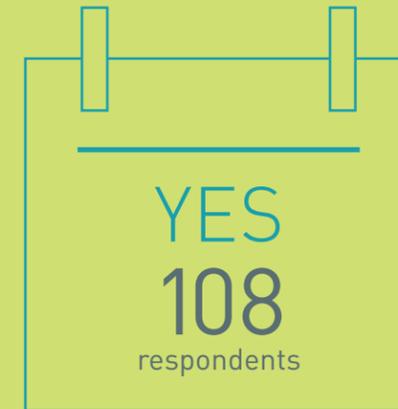


WHAT TYPE OF WORKSPACE DO YOU HAVE?

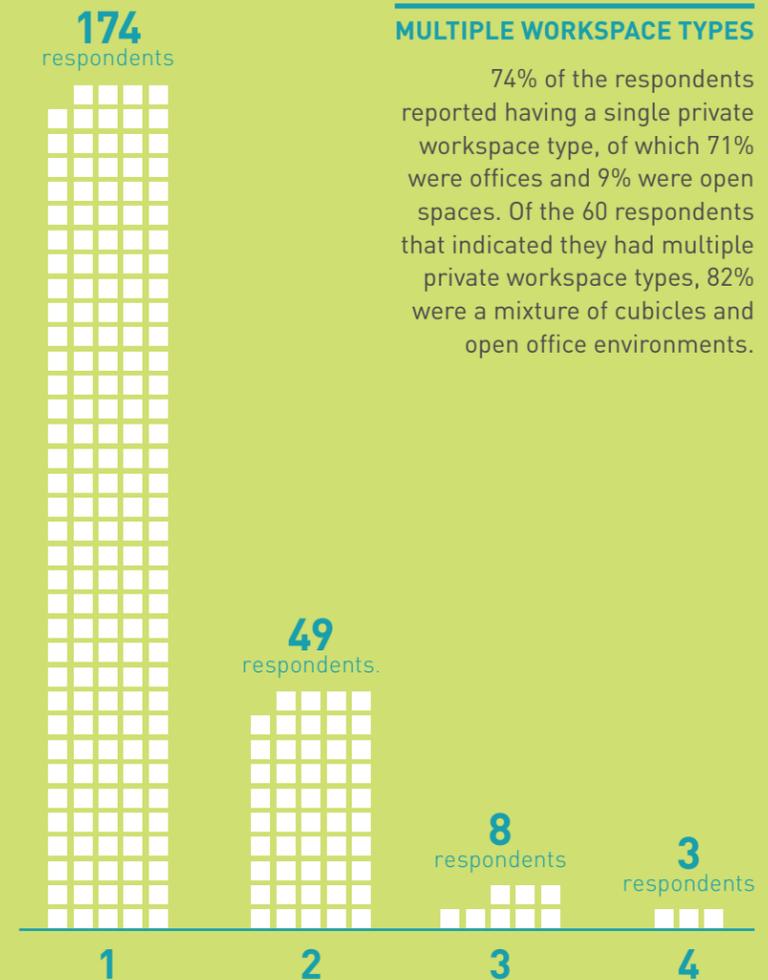
IS YOUR WORKSPACE VISIBLE TO THE PUBLIC EYE?

WORKSPACE CHANGES IN THE LAST 10 YEARS

When asked if there have been changes to their institution's private workspaces in the last 10 years, roughly half the respondents said yes. A small group of responses (9%) responded "other," primarily attributed to the respondent's lack of a definitive answer, due either to their short time at their current institution or the relatively recent construction of their library.



“Library staff offices are now next to public areas and more accessible. It is easier for staff to see when patrons need help and easier for patrons to seek help.”

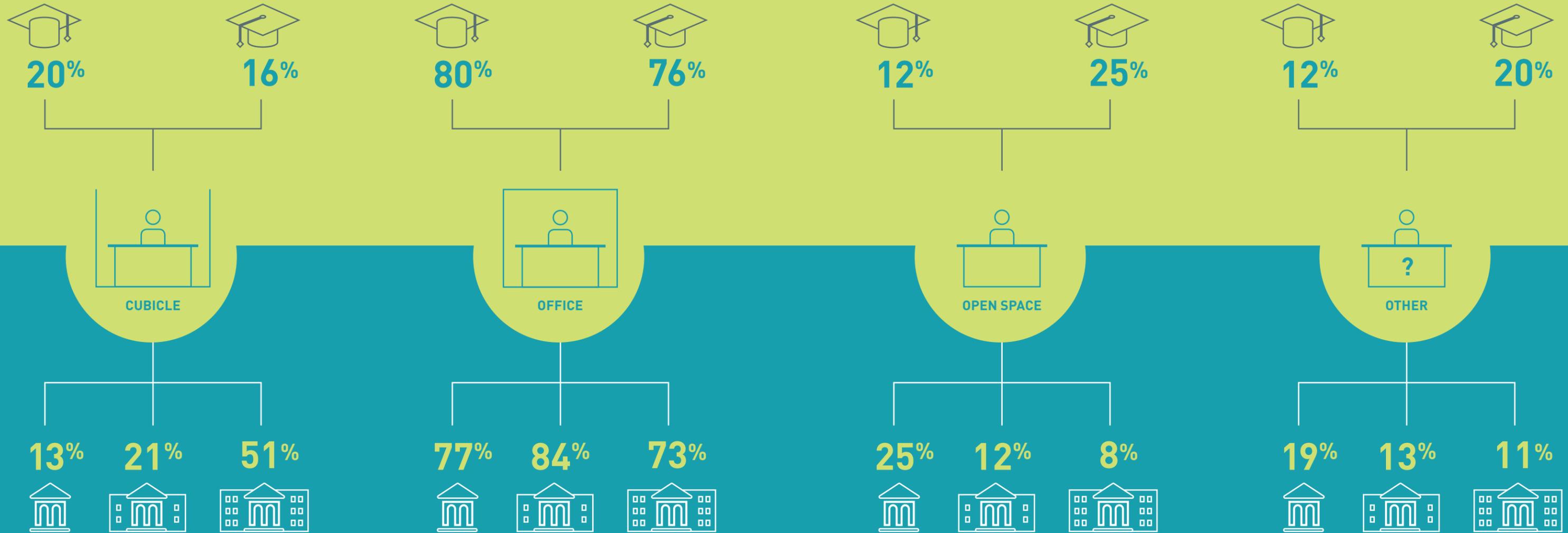


MULTIPLE WORKSPACE TYPES

74% of the respondents reported having a single private workspace type, of which 71% were offices and 9% were open spaces. Of the 60 respondents that indicated they had multiple private workspace types, 82% were a mixture of cubicles and open office environments.

SATISFACTION WITH PRIVATE DESKS

Respondents were nearly evenly split in satisfaction with their private spaces, regardless of institution size. There was a small percentage, no more than 12% of any institution type or size segment, that selected “other” rather than satisfied or dissatisfied. Several of these respondents added comments explaining that they “make it work.” The split between satisfaction and dissatisfaction illustrates that there is not a singular comprehensive solution to a library’s spatial layout to ensure dynamic and engaging spaces.



24% of public university librarians reported being visible to the public and **49%** reported being away from the public eye

35% were satisfied with their space and **31%** were dissatisfied



38% of private university librarians reported being visible to the public and **38%** reported being away from the public eye

30% were satisfied with their space and **38%** were dissatisfied



41% of librarians at smaller universities reported being visible to the public and **41%** reported being away from the public eye

35% were satisfied with their space and **36%** were dissatisfied



24% of librarians at medium-sized universities reported being visible to the public and **66%** reported being away from the public eye

36% were satisfied with their space and **37%** were dissatisfied



13% of librarians at larger universities reported being visible to the public and **43%** reported being away from the public eye

22% were satisfied with their space and **27%** were dissatisfied



RENOVATIONS

“Look at the services offered at the desk and see if we are meeting student expectations at those desks. You need to ask the students before using a sledgehammer.”

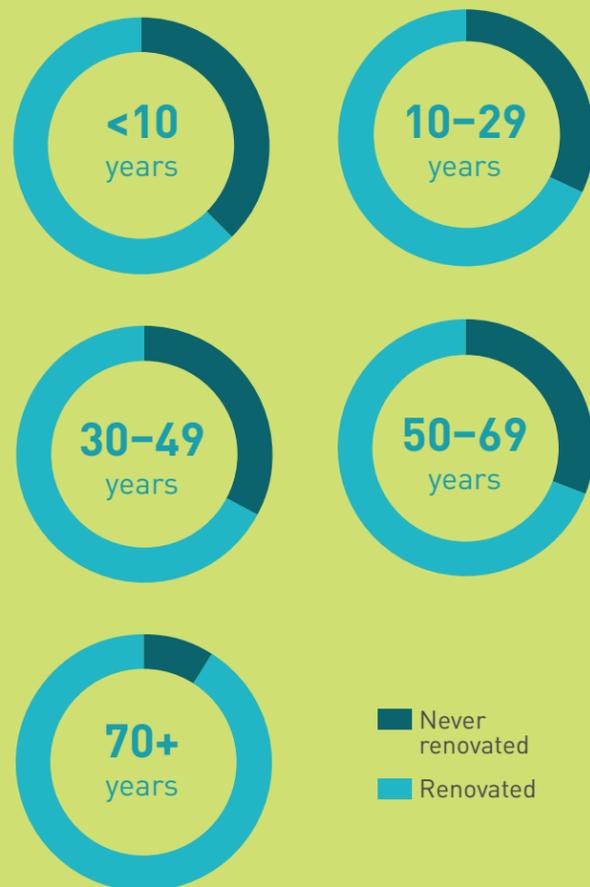
MOST RECENT RENOVATIONS

To better understand how academic librarians' spaces have evolved into their current configurations, the final portion of the survey focused on renovations. 16% of respondents indicated their space had never had a renovation, while over a third of respondents provided information about their most recent renovation.

This section provides insight into the priorities that institutions have made in renovating their libraries' facilities, and explores the motivation and timing of the respondents' most recent renovations.

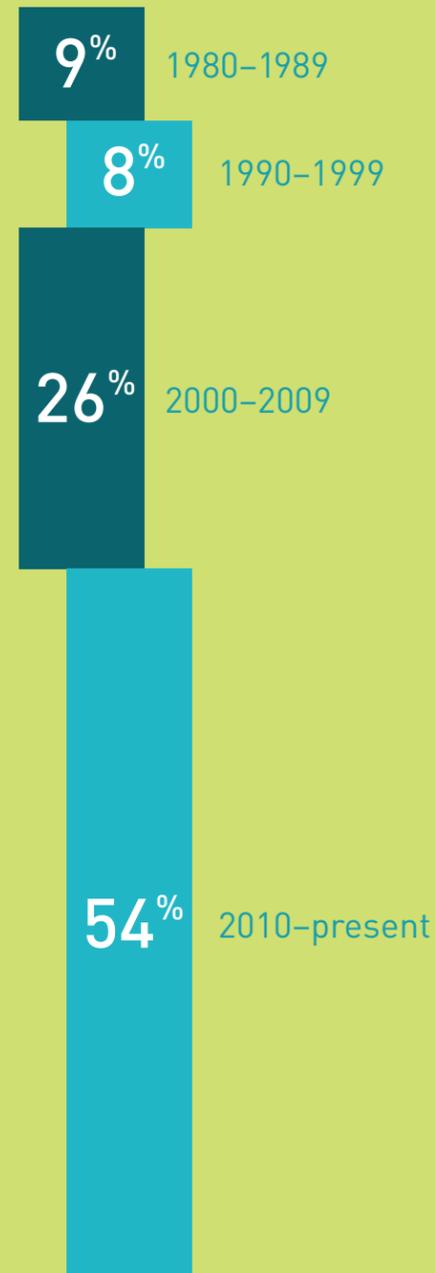
RENOVATION PREVALENCE BY LIBRARY AGE

Libraries 30 years or older, (built before 1985), made up 79% of the libraries represented by the survey respondents. Only 40% of this majority group have been renovated within the last 10 years, in comparison to 66% of the minor 21% of respondents with a library built within the past 30 years.



RENOVATIONS BY DECADE

Respondents were asked to indicate when their most recent renovation was undertaken and completed. This provides valuable context and explanation as to why 54% of all renovations have taken place within the past 5 years. The survey intentionally skewed its focus on more recent events to better understand current trends, thus not offering a fair representation of the regularity or total number of renovations libraries may have experienced over the lifetime of the building.



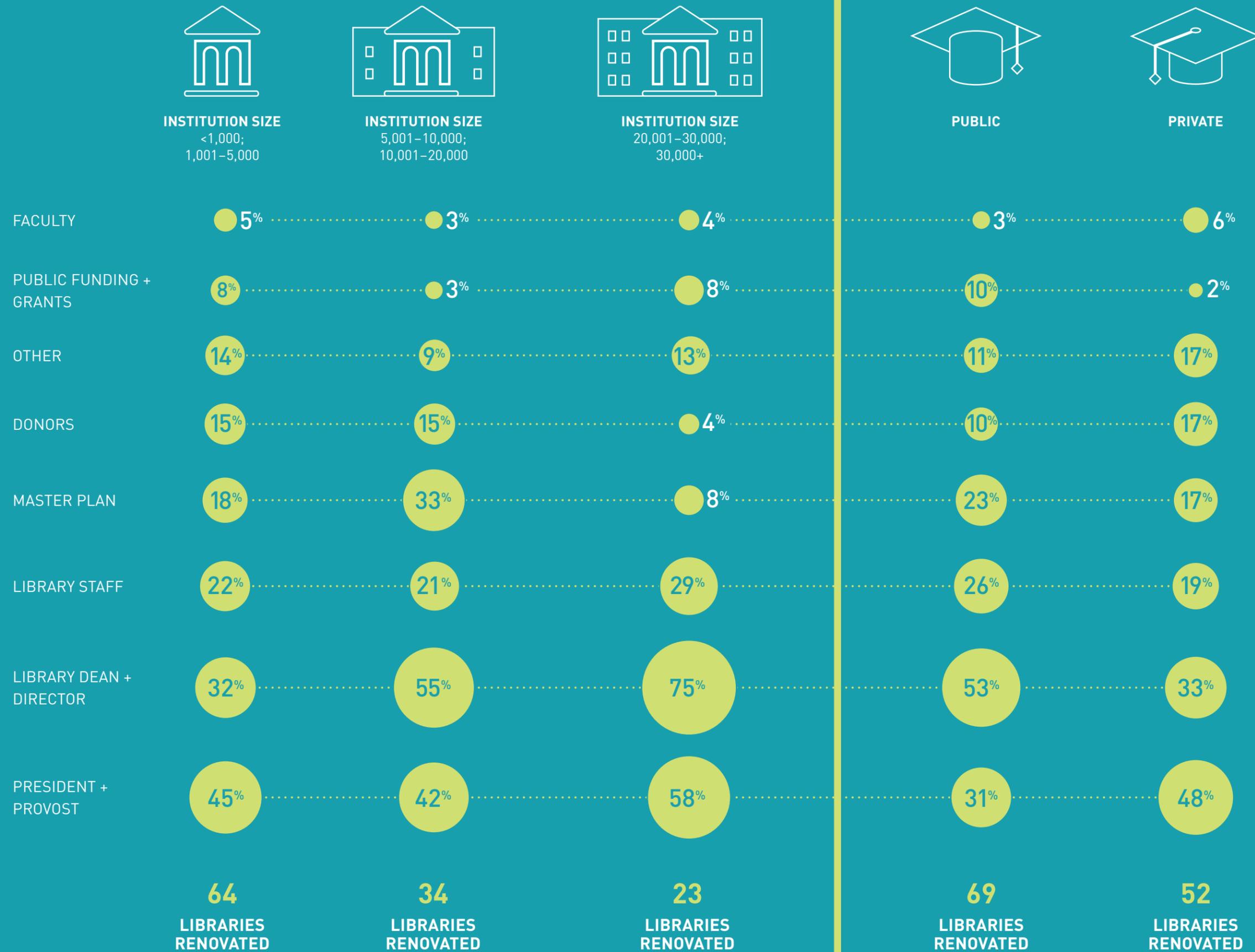
NUMBER OF AREAS CHANGED

While over half of our respondents did not provide information about the significantly changed areas from their library's last renovation, the 36% of respondents who did indicated that renovations impacted as few as one and as many as 11 spaces. 52% of the renovations described impacted five or fewer spaces.



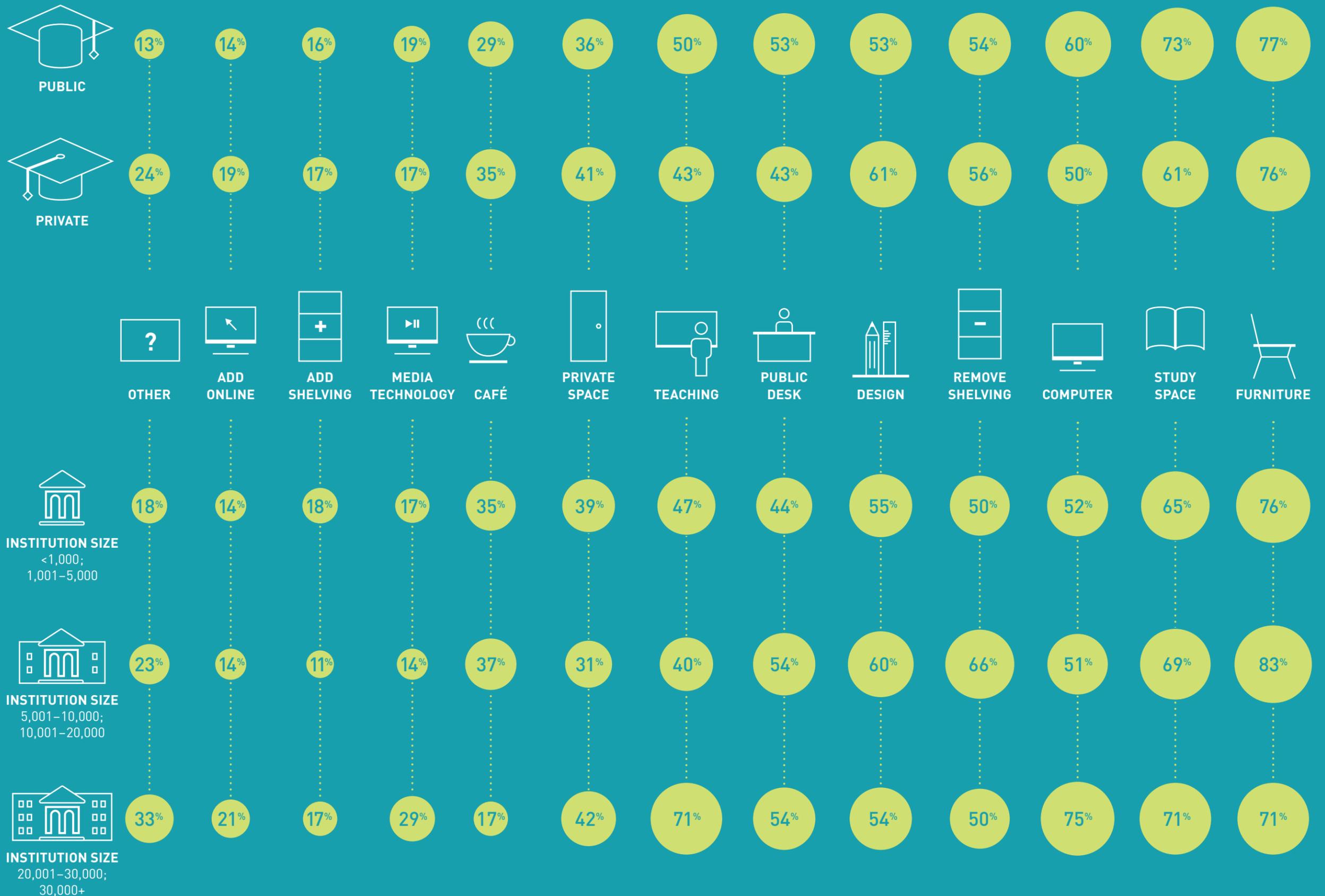
RENOVATION INITIATORS

Respondents were asked to identify all parties involved in initiating their library's most recent renovation. Many respondents expressed that changes to their library's spaces were often promoted by influences outside of the library staff's; however, based on our respondents' experience, regardless of institution type and size, the library staff represents 20-30% of the influence for their library's renovation development. Perhaps less surprising is that library and institutional leadership were identified as the overwhelming major influencers on renovations. This breakdown of perceived influence may explain the divergence of areas impacted by most recent renovations and our respondents' priorities.



AREAS OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

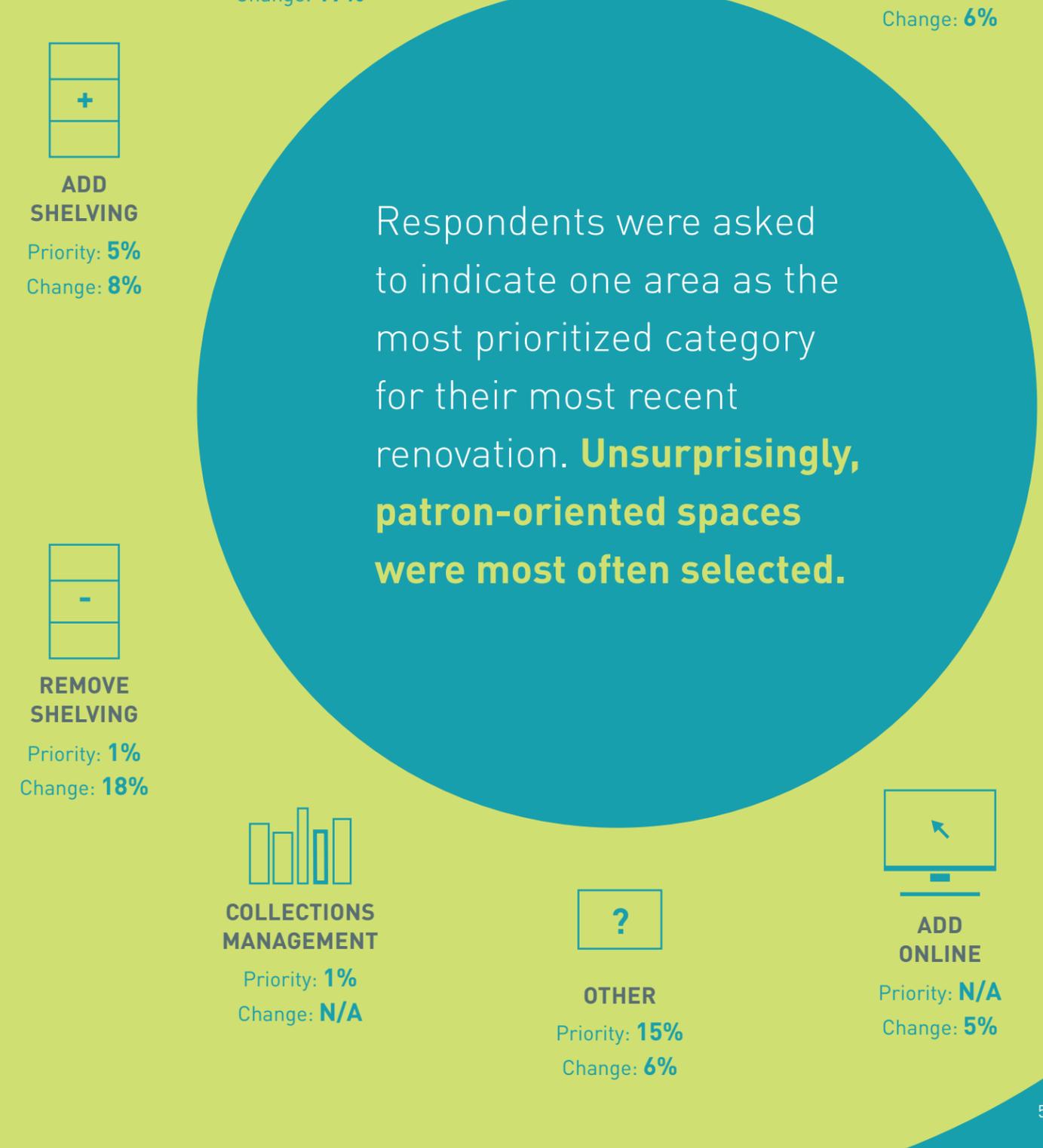
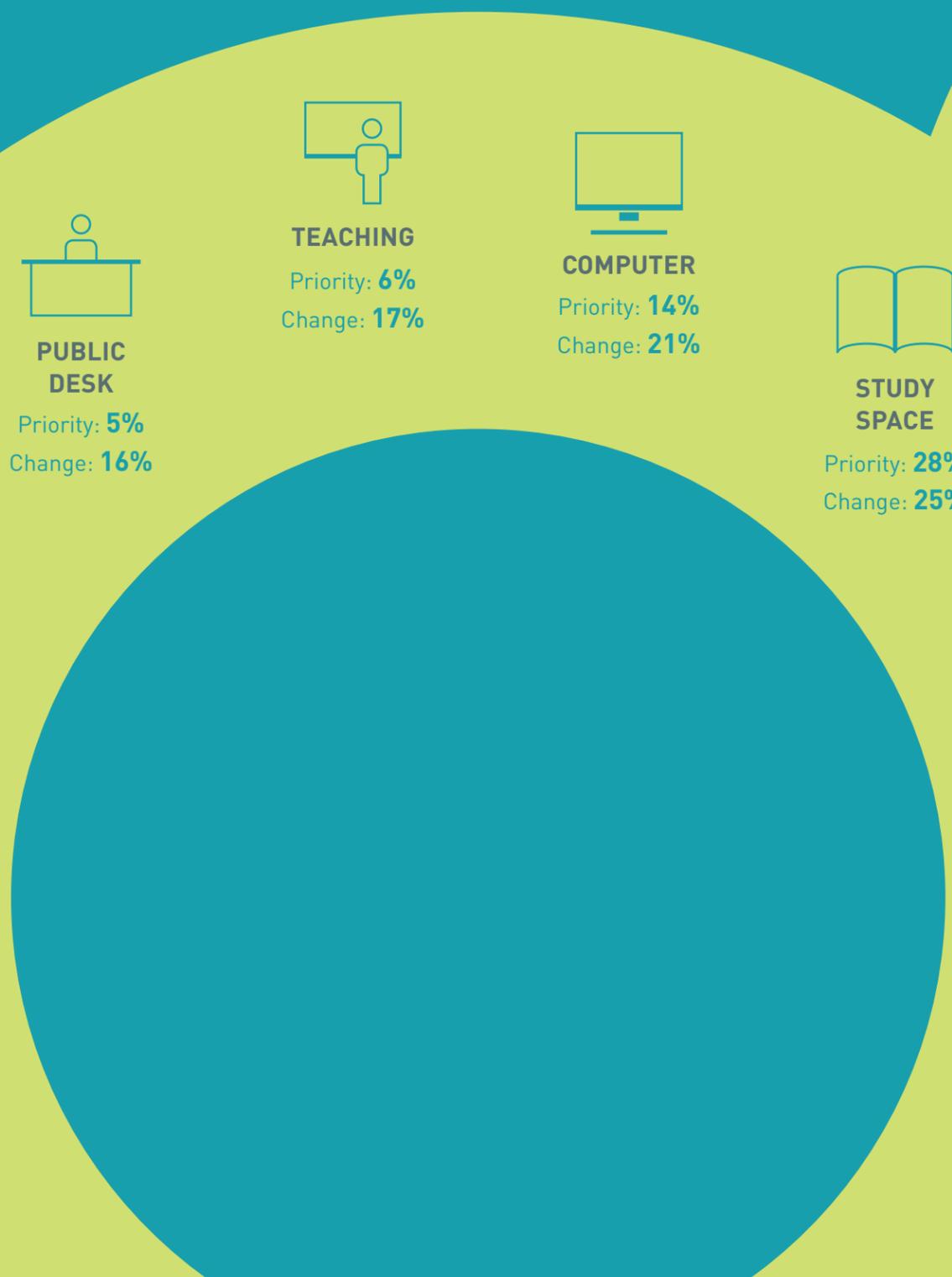
Respondents identified all areas of significant change in their most recent renovation. Consistently across institution size and type, furniture, study and computer spaces, and shelving removal were selected. The survey did not follow this line of questions further, and so we cannot draw clear lines of relation between these not-so-disparate elements.



Of the 107 respondents that indicated their shelving experienced changes during renovation, 58% experienced collection deaccessioning, 20% added compact shelving, and 9% moved to off-site storage of their holdings. 14% reported other actions were taken towards their shelving, such as increased or relocated shelving, or implementation of an automated storage and retrieval system.

PRIORITIES VS. ACTUAL RENOVATION CHANGES

Below is a telling depiction of the disconnected and aligned priorities of respondents and the implemented renovations of their libraries. Focus on the glaring disparities is emphasized below, where librarians have placed little priority on changing: café, removing shelving, changing public desks, and furniture. The only category ranked as a high priority by librarians and given a lower renovation impact was other, which included superficial changes, such as carpet and paint, and more substantive changes such as adding archival space, removing teaching areas, and providing lounge spaces for students. One respondent remarked: "remember, these are not necessarily POSITIVE changes."

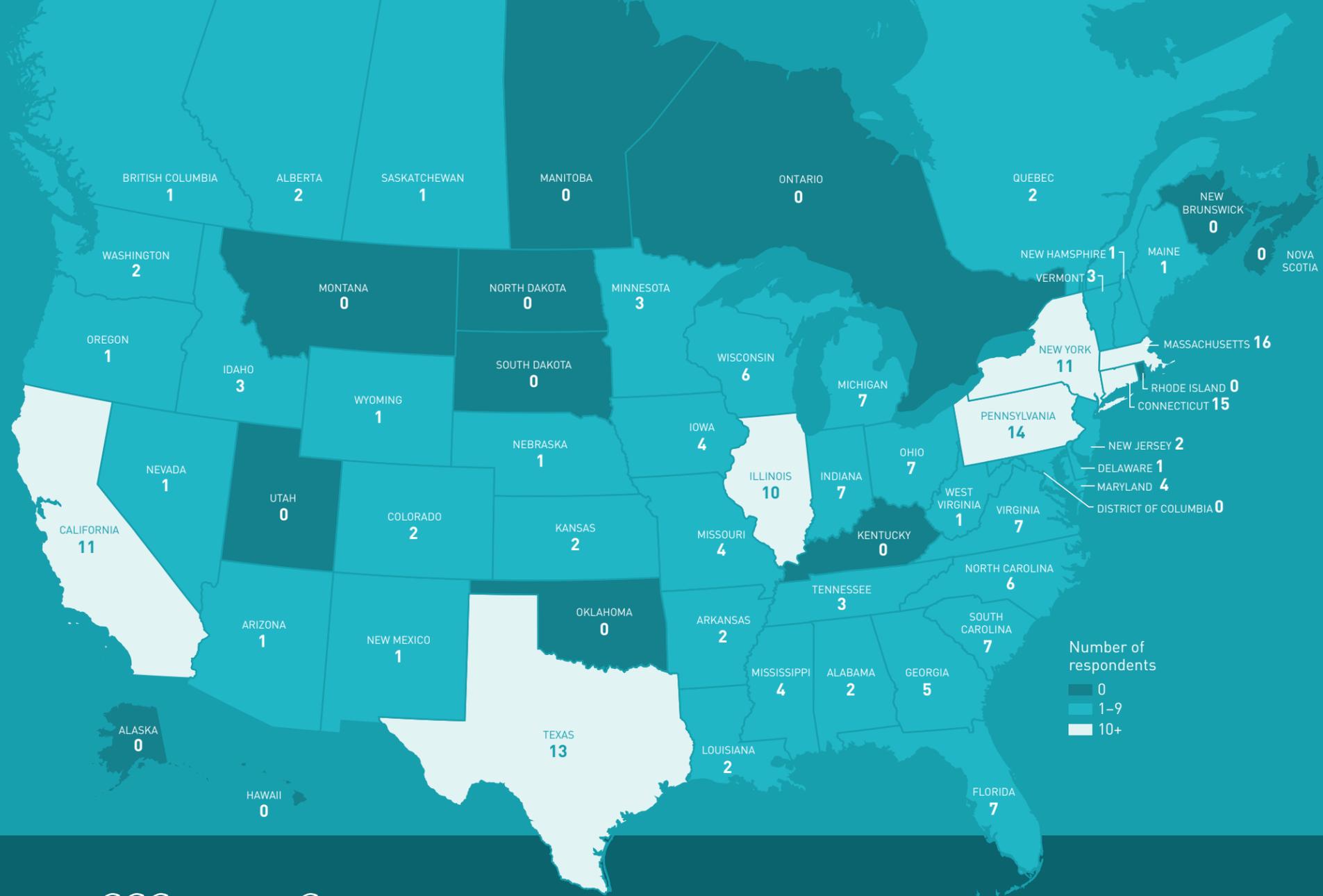


RENOVATIONS BY LOCATION

Four states —Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Texas—make up 32% of the renovations reported by respondents. It is not surprising that Connecticut and Pennsylvania, the two most responsive states, make up a significant portion of renovations.

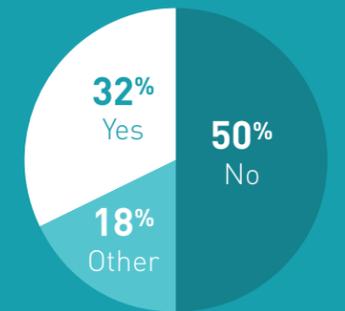
208

respondents



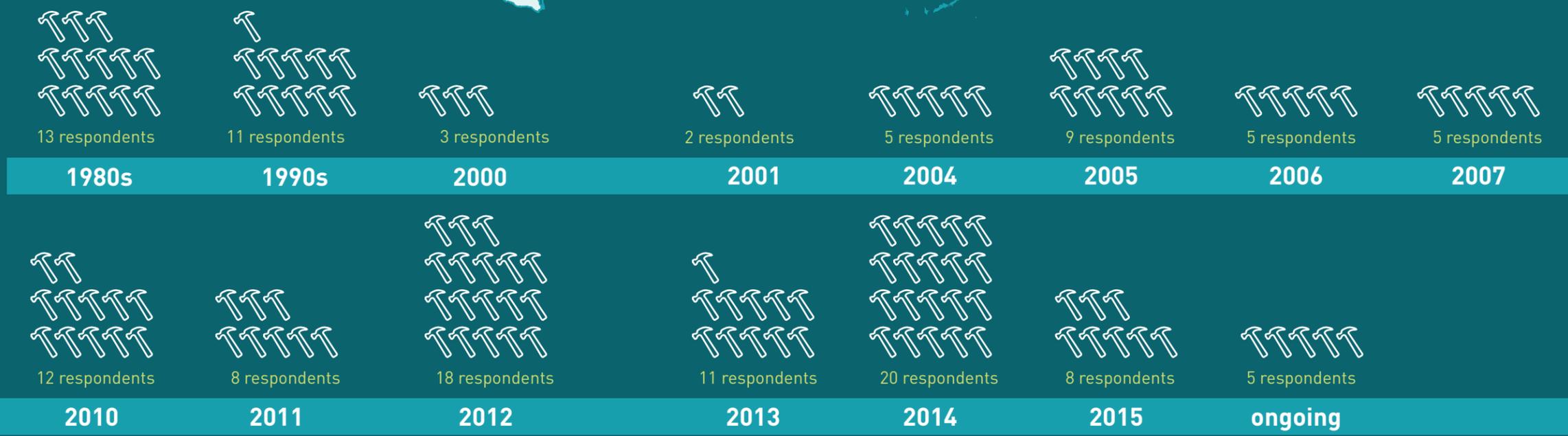
CHANGES TO LIBRARIAN SPACES

While over one-third of our respondents confirmed information about their most recent renovation, only 32% of that group indicated the librarian spaces experienced any changes.



RENOVATIONS PER YEAR

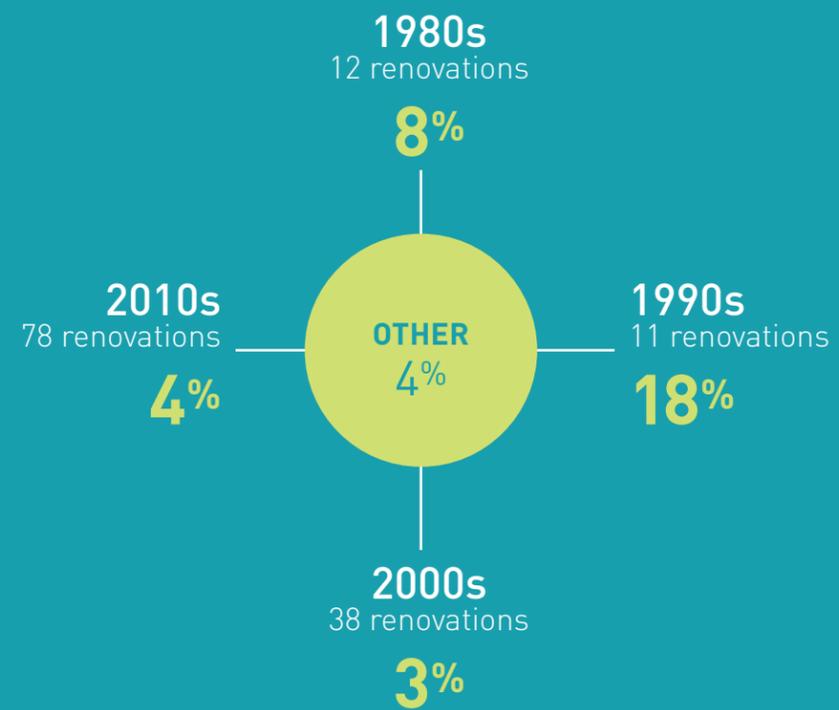
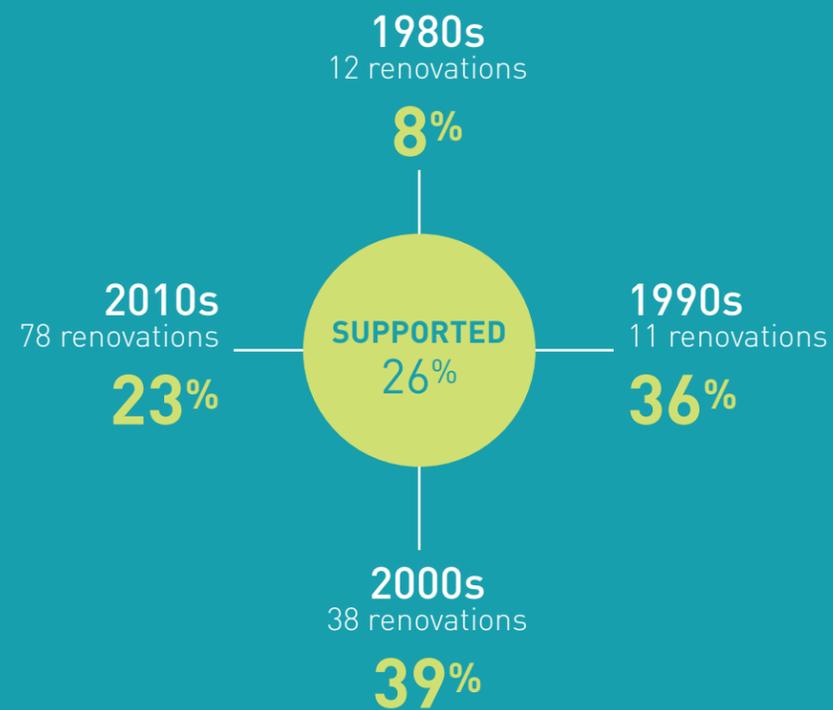
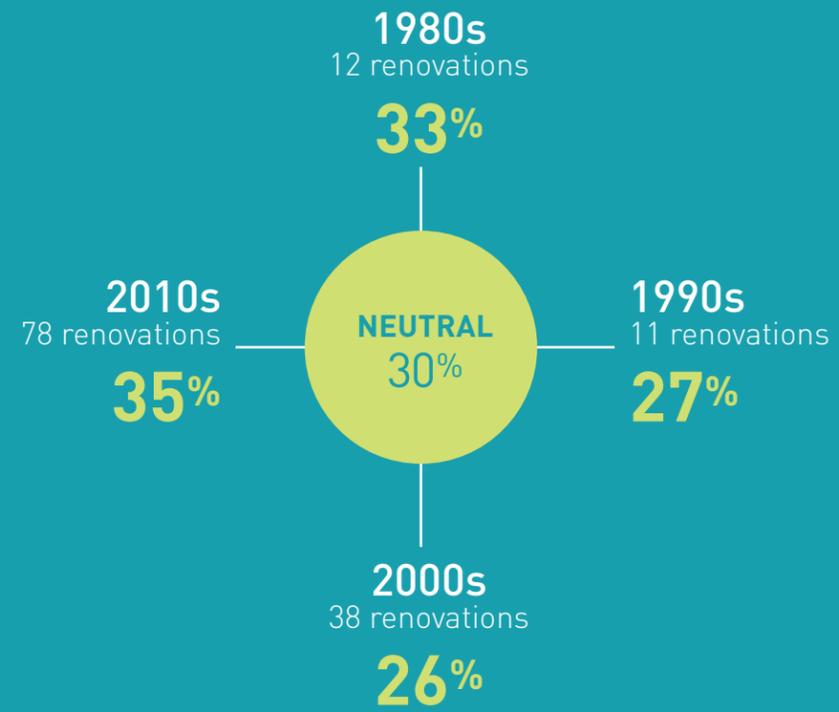
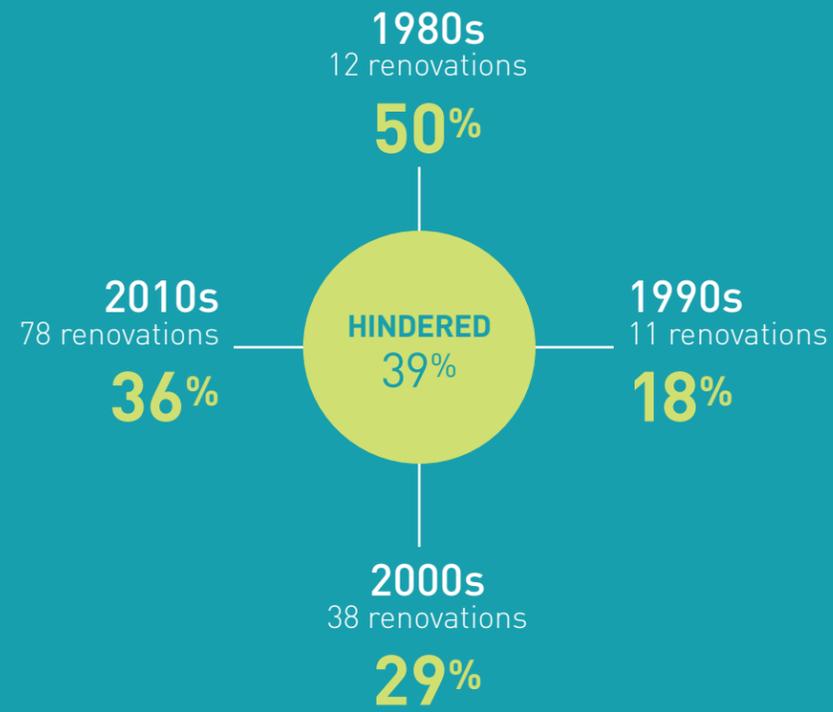
When asked when their most recent renovation took place, almost all respondents indicated they had experienced some degree of renovation since the start of the 21st century. The focus of this question on recency prevented respondents from providing a full history of their library's renovations over the lifetime of the building. Thus only 18% of respondents indicated their most recent renovation occurred before 2000; while 13% were renovated in 2012 alone.



OVERALL SATISFACTION

FUNCTIONALITY OF CURRENT SPACE

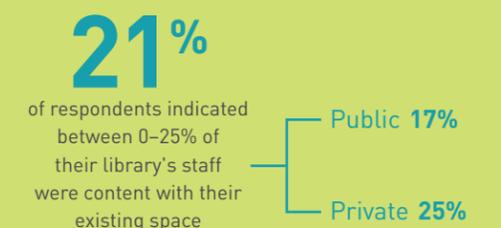
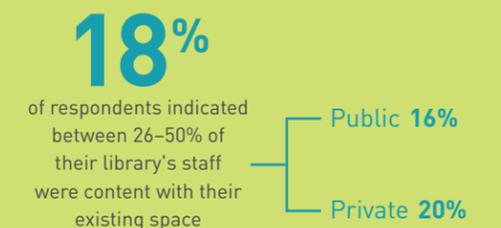
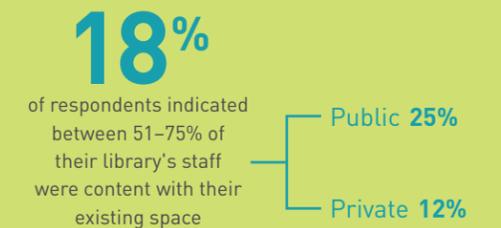
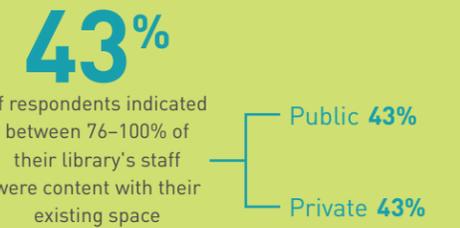
In conclusion to the survey, respondents were asked about how their spaces are fulfilling their current work's needs. 39% of respondents said their spaces are hindering to their current work. When this question is paired with data about respondents' most recent renovations, an interesting positive correlation is that more recent renovations being more hindering than the previous decade. This is disconcerting for the library profession, particularly as their patron-oriented spaces continue to be designed with a prescient lens and a level of care that does not appear to be applied to librarian's spaces.



“I think there might be a need for a different configuration but we never have examined the topic.”

STAFF SATISFACTION

Despite the uptick in hindering spaces, 43% of respondents indicated that less than 25% of their institution's library staff are discontent with their existing space. While this is a promising indicator, several respondents commented they had never been prompted to think about their workspaces prior to the survey. These comments lead us to conclude that research opportunities such as this survey can aid designers in more proactively engaging and educating clients.



**“I WOULD LIKE
ALL PLACES IN
WHICH REFERENCE
LIBRARIANS INTERACT
WITH PATRONS TO BE
MORE WELCOMING.”**

“With the prominence of the circulation desk and the good signage on the reference desk, students usually know which librarian to approach for what purpose.”

“Workspaces are generally 'make do' with an old space, not designed for the type of work we do today.”

“WE NEEDED TO
MAXIMIZE THE
FLEXIBILITY OF
SPACE UTILIZATION
TO BECOME MORE
COLLABORATIVE AND
LESS STOVEPIPED.”

**“This has been really interesting
to think about how I feel about
the spaces and how it affects
my work and mood.”**

As an institution moves forward with a reorganization or renovation, it is worth remembering the typical library patron does not know how a library organizes its staff, what a librarian's job title is, or what the staff organizational chart and lines of authority are—they know only they have a question, request, or transaction that needs to be addressed.

For any library seeking to reorganize its staff, looking at the situation through the lens of the typical patron is a good place to start. Here are a few tips for a library that is re-examining how their staff spaces are organized:

- 1. There is not a one-size-fits-all solution.** Each library has its own unique culture where patrons interact with the facility in a unique and nuanced way. While it is useful to examine what one's peer libraries are up to, a brilliant solution at one library may not translate well to another. Think about who you are and what your mission is. What do you want your first impression to be? What activities require patrons to interface with staff, and what activities can be self-guided? In what unique ways do your staff interact with each other?
- 2. Create a master plan and an implementation strategy, then stick to it.** Don't think of space planning as putting out fires. Look at the far horizon—the ideal arrangement you want to achieve—then break it down into smaller, incremental steps. Very few libraries can afford to implement a bold vision in one giant step.
- 3. Design for the mission of the library, not the personalities of the staff.** A common mistake is designing staff spaces to respond to the dynamics of the current staff. Your staff spaces should be designed around the library's mission and work flow, not to accommodate the personalities at hand. Put another way, if staff spaces are in alignment with the mission of the library yet certain staff raise objections, then perhaps there is an issue of cultural fit on the part of the staff member.
- 4. Take some cues from the corporate sector.** Corporations have done an immense amount of research and testing on new and innovative staff spaces, and for good reason. Employee satisfaction and efficiency are a high priority for them. One of the more interesting concepts being applied today is the distributed office, based on the idea that staff are most productive, engaged, and—frankly—happy, when they have the possibility to move to different environments throughout the day, depending on what the task is. Varied spaces allow them to be isolated and contemplative when they need to focus on a specific task, or engaged and animated when the dynamics of a larger group activity are required.
- 5. Design for change.** It's natural to believe we have the correct answer, the correct approach, the perfect arrangement—but this does not work out very well when designing staff spaces. One should have the humility to acknowledge that things change. New, unforeseen technologies emerge, new academic programs and initiatives are introduced, and leadership transitions. The master plan should provide a strong organizing framework, but the particulars should be capable of easy modification. Don't be afraid to test new ideas, new arrangements, and new possibilities.

Thank you!

Without the generosity of our respondents, in terms of both time and information provided, this survey would not have been possible. The wide range of institution sizes and types, as well as geographic regions and years of professional experience represented by our respondents allow us to speak more authoritatively on this previously unexamined topic.

This experience with the readily responsive library community inspires us at Sasaki Associates to keep this conversation active and to seek ways to expand it for the benefit of libraries and librarians alike.

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