

CATALOG CARDS FROM THE EDGE: PRECARITY IN LIBRARIES

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BC Library Conference

Welcome!
Everything is fine.

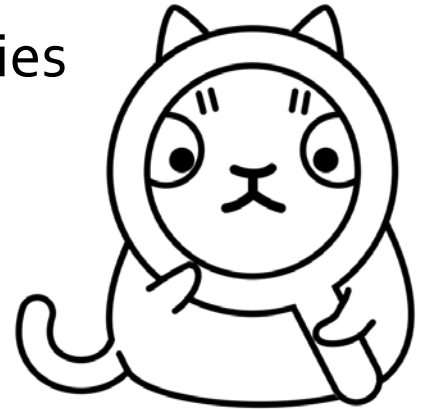


OUTLINE

- What's the big deal?
 - Motivating problems, research, and questions
- What does precarity in (BC) libraries look like?
 - Partnership Job Board data
 - Interviews on precarity
- What can we do about it?
 - Further questions, resources and discussion

OUTCOMES

- More familiarity with research on precarity
- Critical consideration of its effects and possible solutions
- Increased discussion of precarity in libraries



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WHAT IS PRECARITY?

A state of material and psychological vulnerability resulting from uncertain pay, hours, or employment duration as well as a lack of access to social protections and benefits often connected with employment.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Precarity:

- Correlates with poor mental health (Canivet et al, 2017; Han et al, 2017, OFL Survey, 2017)
- Reduces investment in places of work (Zhang & Zuberi, 2017)
- Disproportionately affects those with marginalized identities (PEPSO, 2015; Vosko, MacDonald & Campbell, 2009)

DISCUSSION OF PRECARITY IN LIBRARIES

barely
footage not found

**RESEARCH:
WHAT WE DID & WHAT WE FOUND**

WHAT DOES PRECARITY IN (BC) LIBRARIES LOOK LIKE?

Part 1: Quantitative data

- Methodology: content analysis of job advertisements posted on the Partnership Job Board over a period of 20 weeks (Nov 15, 2017 to April 5, 2018).
- Sample: 342 postings
 - Of the total postings, 102 were in BC (30%)

LIMITATIONS

- Limited time period (20 weeks)
- Job postings only
- Partnership Job Board has limited scope
 - Some institutions do not post there (fee to post)
 - Missing internal job postings
 - Tendency towards academic and public
 - Focus on librarian & library technician positions

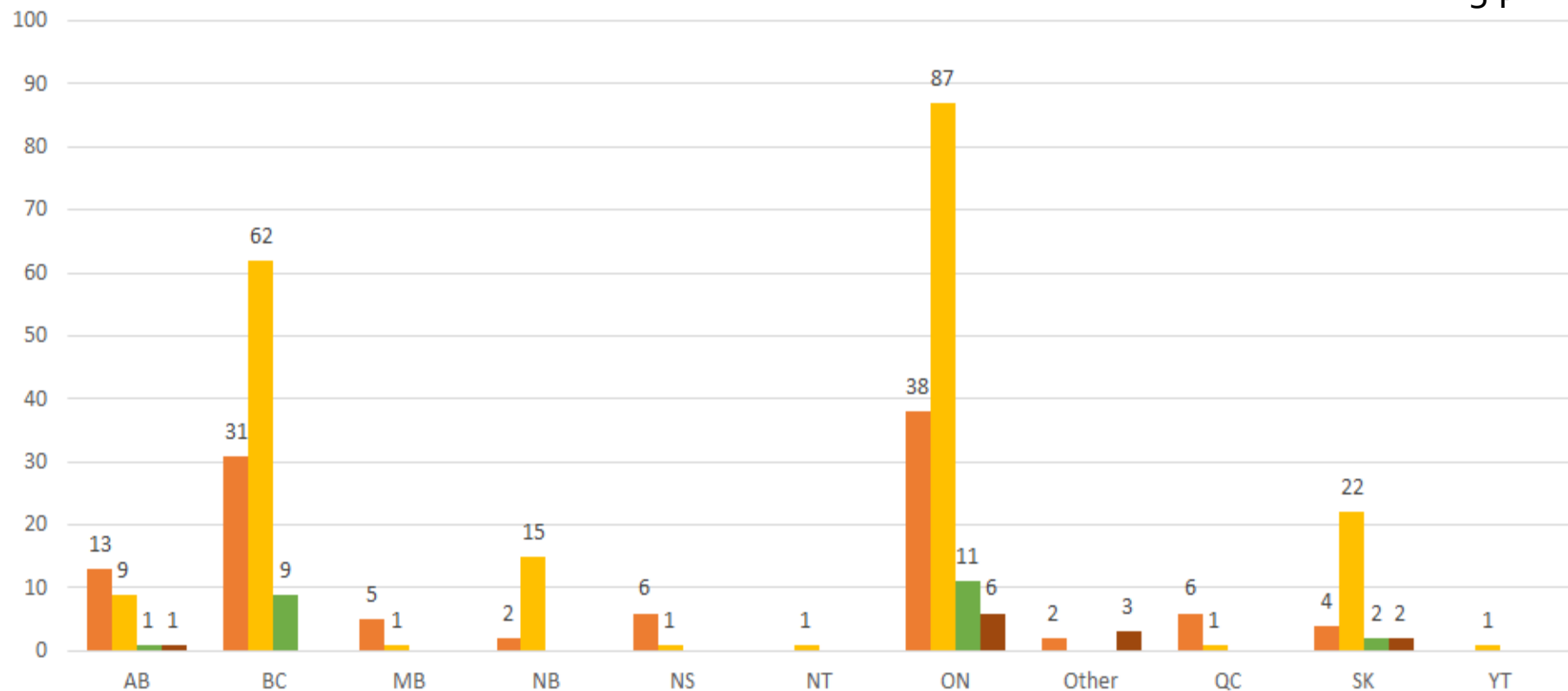
TERMINOLOGY

- Auxiliary: no regularly scheduled hours (on-call)
- Part-time: 1-34 hours/week
- Full-time: 35+ hours/week
- Contract: position with a limited term (FT or PT)
- Continuing: position is ongoing (FT or PT)

Type of institution by province

Academic Public Special Other

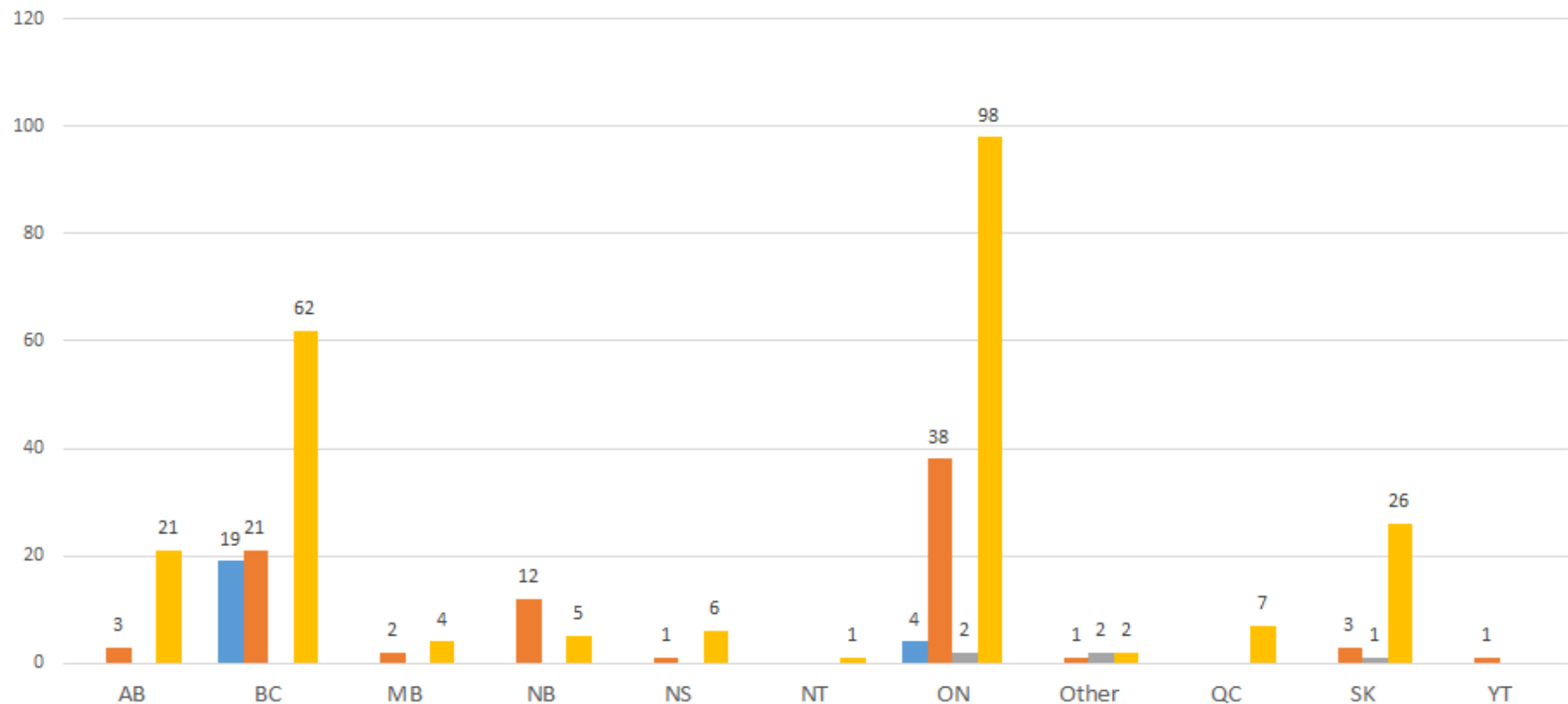
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Type of position by province

■ auxiliary ■ contract ■ contract/auxiliary ■ continuing

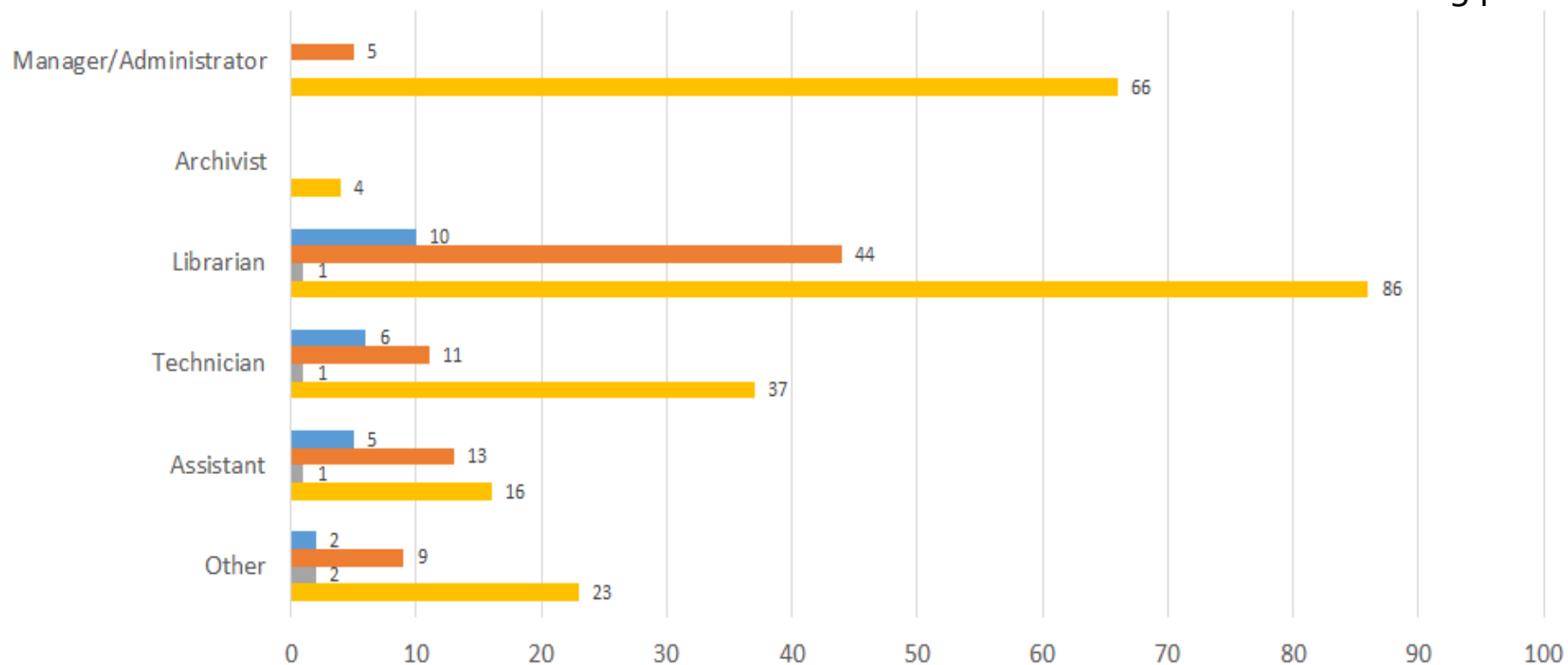
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Type of position by job category

■ auxiliary ■ contract ■ contract/auxiliary ■ continuing

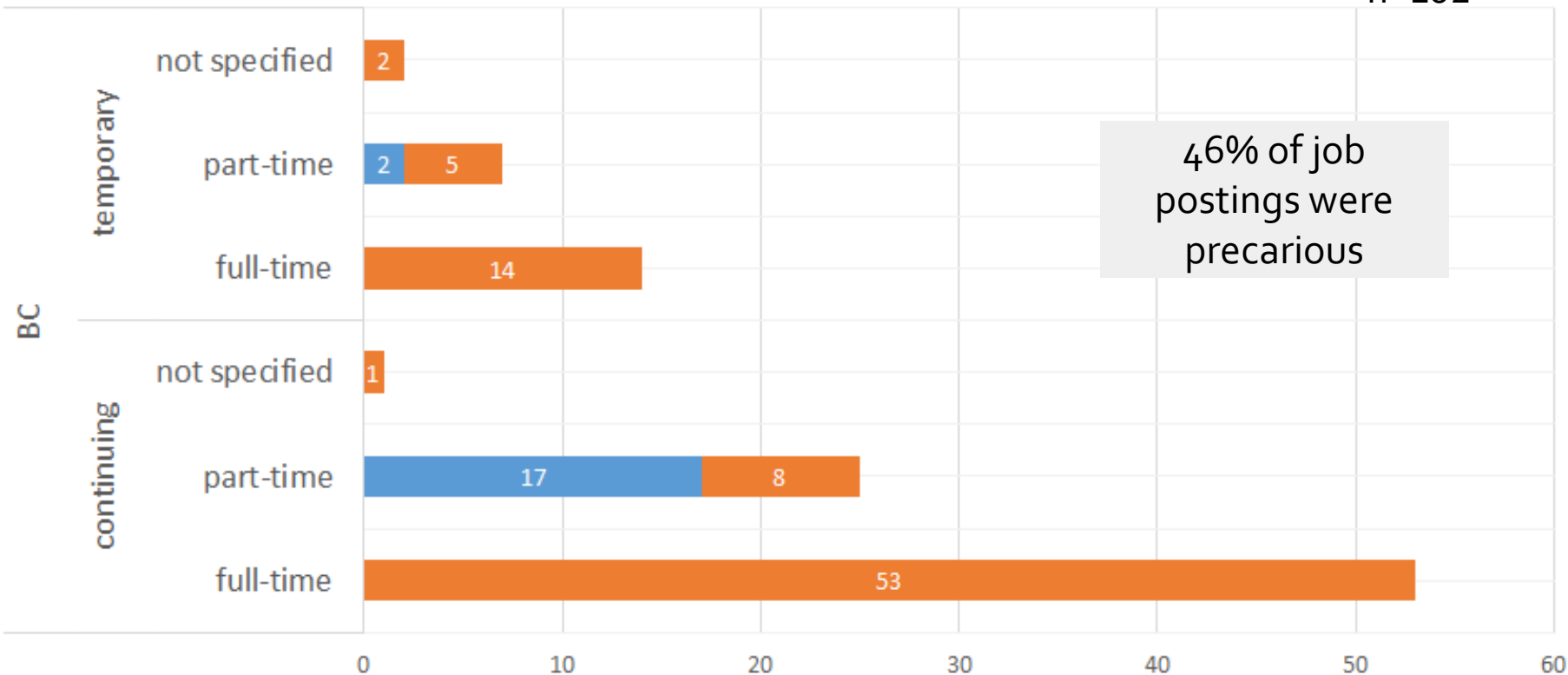
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Type of employment in British Columbia

Auxiliary/On-Call Regular

n=102



46% of job postings were precarious

BC LIBRARIES: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- In the 20 week period, BC institutions make up 30% of the postings on the Partnership Job Board.
- BC job postings are:
 - 61% public, 30% academic, 9% special
 - **39% temporary** (no permanent part-time or full-time hours)
 - **46% precarious** (19% auxiliary, 13% part-time, 14% temp full-time)
 - **85% of the total auxiliary job postings** on PJB are from BC

WHAT DOES PRECARITY IN (BC) LIBRARIES LOOK LIKE?

Part 2: Qualitative data

- Interviews on precarity
 - Initial process: conducted 12 interviews and analyzed 8 interviews as of May, 2018.
 - Population: library workers who are currently or previously employed at a library in British Columbia OR are actively searching for employment at libraries.

METHODOLOGY


The Hermeneutic Dialectic Process

“[This process] is hermeneutic because it is interpretive in character, and dialectic because it represents a comparison and contrast of divergent views with a view to achieving a higher-level synthesis of them all” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 149).

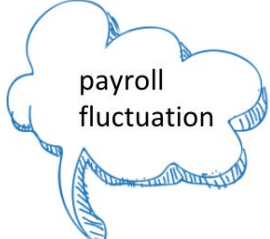
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your experience of precarious work?
2. Has the existence of precarious work influenced decisions you have made?
3. What do you see as positive outcomes of precarious work?
4. What do you see as negative outcomes of precarious work?
5. What do you see as factors that contribute to the existence of precarious work?
6. How will it change in future, are there any ways it can be improved?

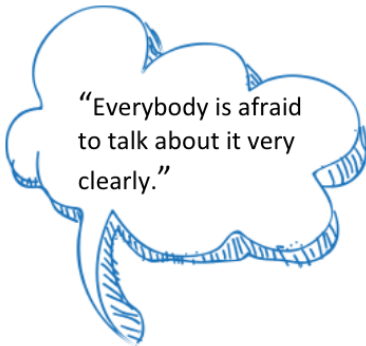
FINDINGS: THE IMPACT OF PRECARIOUS WORK



"A reality that sucks!"



payroll fluctuation



"Everybody is afraid to talk about it very clearly."

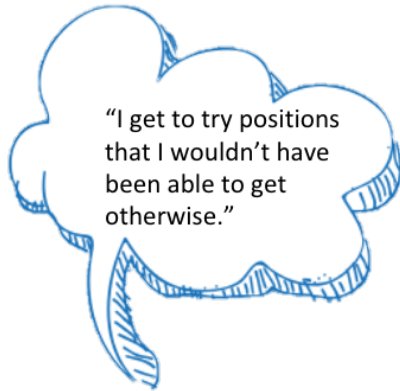
Personal Life:

- Decisions about where to live
- Economic pressure to support family

Career:

- Obstacle in searching for the next position
- Accepting permanent full-time positions not in preferred and specialized areas
- Lower career expectations

FINDINGS: THE POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF PRECARIOUS WORK




Individual:

- Flexibility: spend more time with family
- A variety of work experience

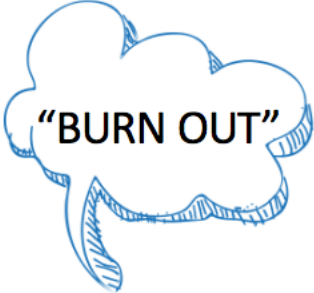
Organization:

- Flexibility: meeting service requirements; economic efficiency
- Cross-pollination of ideas


FINDINGS: THE NEGATIVE OUTCOMES OF PRECARIOUS WORK



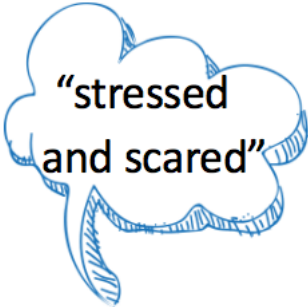
“blind leading the blind”



“BURN OUT”



“Don't get sick.”

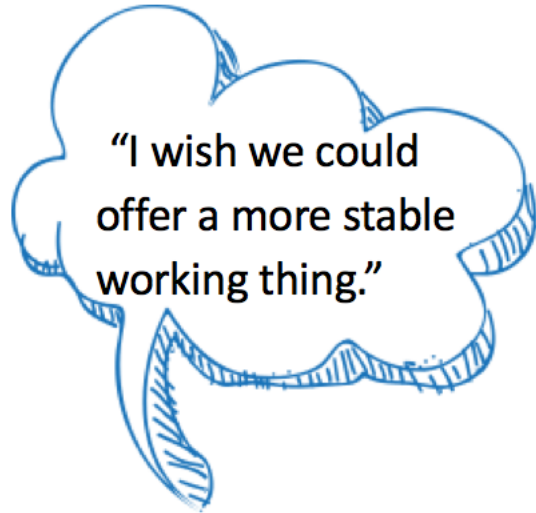


“stressed and scared”

Individual:

- Stress: mental and physical health; financial stress
- Lack: benefits; **work-life balance**; integration with the organization; supervision and support; **professional development and training**; freedom to take risks; control over one's time and career; time and desire to be involved in professional activities; deep experience and knowledge
- Difficulty in transitioning to full-time work
- **Vulnerability** pertaining to discussions of precarity

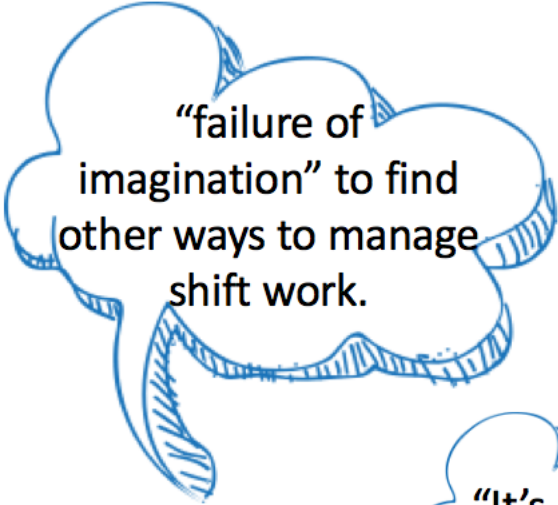
FINDINGS: THE NEGATIVE OUTCOMES OF PRECARIOUS WORK




Organization:

- Higher turnover
- Higher cost of training
- Difficulty with scheduling
- Weaker relationships between employees and organizations
- Poorer library service
- Reduced capacity for teamwork
- Lack of mutual commitment

FINDINGS: FACTORS



“failure of imagination” to find other ways to manage shift work.



“It’s not just for libraries!”

- Tight budget
- Public policy: insufficient financial support
- Challenge of filling unwanted shifts with permanent employees
- Work ethic
- The lack of initiative and willingness to change the existing structure

FINDINGS: CHANGES & THE FUTURE

advocacy

silencing
effect

role of union

“This is a
worthwhile issue
to cover!”

not
optimistic

trend of
increasing
precarity

QUESTIONS TO TAKE WITH YOU

- (How) is precarity discussed? In general? In the workplace?
 - Are conditions in place for us to talk freely and openly about it?
- What are precarity's effects on service, work, and organizational culture?
 - Are the economic efficiencies worth these effects?
- How does precarity relate to professional values—diversity, access, inclusion, community, and freedom of information?
 - Are there better ways to live out these values?

OUR VALUES AND PRECARITY

“We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and **advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.**”

ALA Code of Ethics

SO WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

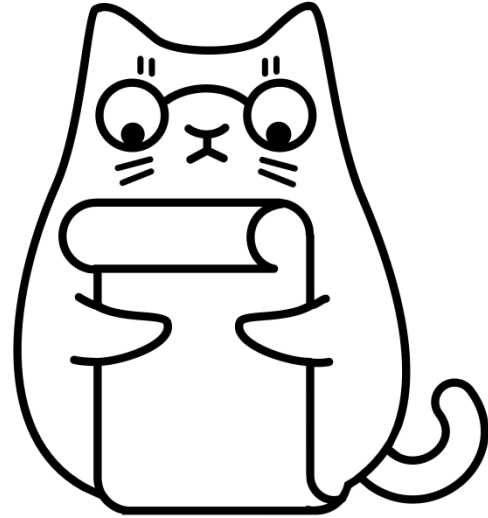
- Talk about it
- Learn what your union is doing & participate
- Take note of where it is occurring in your institution & to whom
- More research!

#precarityis

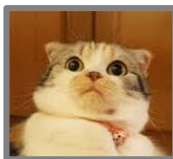
FUTURE RESEARCH

- Proportion of precarious work within institutions
- Impact of precarious work on ability for profession to live up to its stated values
- More granular / longitudinal analysis of precarious positions (geographic location, year over year trends)
- Relation between precarity and privilege
- In what way can or should things change?

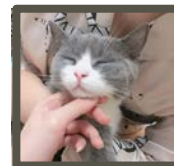
RESOURCES:
<https://osf.io/ybczx/>



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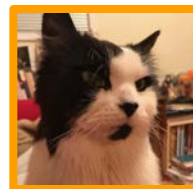


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