

Overdue:

Pay Equity for  
Library Workers

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) represents more than 2,500 public library workers in communities throughout British Columbia. Those workers are the lifeblood of community libraries, providing vital information and education services such as cataloguing, document processing, research, children's services, information technology support, binding, mending, graphics and much more.

Unfortunately, the wages paid to library workers in communities across B.C. are chronically low given the importance of the services provided, the educational requirements for many positions and the wages paid to library workers in some other provinces. Library workplaces in B.C. are predominantly female-dominated. The sad truth is that, as in other female-dominated workplaces, the jobs in B.C. libraries are woefully underpaid.

This report will illustrate how poorly paid library jobs are in comparison to male-dominated municipal and educational jobs. We believe that the low wages are the result of gender discrimination and that employers must take action to reverse this discrimination. Pay equity adjustments are long overdue for library workers in B.C.

## Public Libraries

There are 75 local public library boards in B.C. Public library services are provided at 241 public library facilities throughout the province.

Our public libraries have very high usage. In 2005, total circulation in B.C. libraries was 52.147 million or 12.61 items per capita. That's up from 11.34 items per capita ten years earlier.

Also in 2005, there were a total of 2,111 full time equivalent staff working at public libraries throughout the province, providing valuable information and educational services to the general public.<sup>2</sup>

The Canadian Union of Public Employees is certified to represent workers of 23 B.C. public library systems in the diverse communities of Dawson Creek, Trail, Smithers, Vancouver Island, Penticton, Terrace, Okanagan, Fraser Valley, Greater Victoria, Vancouver, Burnaby, Prince Rupert, Nelson, North Vancouver City, Gibsons, Surrey, Coquitlam, Port Moody, Kitimat, Powell River, Grand Forks, Castlegar and Richmond.

There is no doubt that B.C. public libraries provide a vital service for the public. Libraries play a key role in communities by providing resources for all citizens, augmenting

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<sup>1</sup> We acknowledge and thank Cheryl Stadnichuck and CUPE Research in Saskatchewan whose 2001 library pay equity report was a great help in structuring this report.

<sup>2</sup> British Columbia Public Library Statistics 2005 Public Library Services Branch, Ministry of Education, Victoria, 2006.

learning opportunities for both children and adults, assisting students, small businesses and others who need research as well as ensuring free access to information in a world where information is increasingly becoming commercialized.

The fact that per capita circulation of library materials has increased over the last decade is a clear illustration of how valuable libraries are for British Columbians. Libraries help strengthen our communities and make them better places to live. Public libraries are key to a democratic, egalitarian society because they ensure all citizens have access to a wide range of information and knowledge.

## Demands of Library Jobs

Library positions require a high degree of formal education and continuing professional skill development. Entry-level jobs require a grade 12 education but many require two-year post-secondary training, a bachelor's degree or a master's degree, in the case of librarians. Many library workers also acquire specialization in areas like children's services, adult education or government documents.

Library workers are constantly upgrading their information technology skills. Library resources are continuing to migrate from print to electronic sources. Library workers must learn how to use and manage these systems as well as train the public in the systems.

Library workers' work duties are far from sedentary. The library can be considered an industrial workplace requiring heavy lifting, shelving and moving books as common tasks. Consequently, there are significant occupational hazards: repetitive strain injuries, musculoskeletal injuries, harassment and violence from the public. Since libraries are free and open to the public, people from all social backgrounds including people with social and mental health problems visit libraries, requiring library staff to have the social skills to contend with these challenges. Library workers also need to have the social skills to assist and interact with people with various languages other than English, poor literacy skills and patrons who are viewing inappropriate material on the Internet. Libraries should be free and open to the public. Employers and the government must be aware of the tremendous social and communication skills required in library jobs.

## Low Wages as Gender Discrimination

High levels of education and ongoing training in library jobs have not translated into well-paying jobs. Library work is largely women's work. There are few jobs in libraries that are traditionally considered to be male jobs. Traditionally, job categories where women have been concentrated have less pay than those jobs typically considered to be men's work. Low pay in libraries comes from gender discrimination. Library workers' pay has not been based on the value of the work, the skills and education required to do the job, nor the effort and responsibilities required.

Entry-level library positions can easily leave employees as the working poor. Many library workers do not receive full-time hours, but for entry-level workers who do work full-time for the full year, Table 1 shows that in various libraries, they would be above the poverty line as a single person. If, however, they were the sole income provider in a family of three they could easily fall below the poverty line. Even workers whose wages surpassed Statistics Canada's Low-Income Cut-Off line for a family of three, could easily be among Canada's working poor.

**Table 1: Library Entry Level Annual Salaries**  
**Compared to Statistics Canada Low-Income Cut-Off Line (LICO), 2006**

<b><u>City</u></b>	<b><u>Library Entry Level Position</u></b>	<b><u>Annual Salary 2006</u></b>	<b><u>2005 LICO Single Person</u></b>	<b><u>2005 LICO Family of 3</u></b>
Vancouver	Library Assistant I	\$27,137.78	\$20,778	\$31,801
Burnaby	Library Clerk 2	\$28,580.50	\$17,895	\$27,386
Surrey	Branch Assistant	\$32,105.12	\$17,895	\$27,386
North Vancouver City	Circulation Assistant	\$29,292.73	\$17,895	\$27,386
Fraser Valley	Circulation Assistant	\$33,237.39	\$17,895	\$27,386

Sources: CUPE Collective Agreements, Statistics Canada

*CUPE Research*

Ultimately, librarians are the lowest paid professionals in the municipal/library sector. No other position requiring a master's degree is paid so little. While comparable positions in municipal management that require master's degrees have recently been reclassified at higher pay rates, librarians have not.

According to Statistics Canada, men in Canada who worked full-time for the whole year in 2003 earned on average \$51,408. Women who worked similarly earned only \$36,500, or 71% of what men earned.<sup>3</sup> This is an even worse ratio than in 1998 when on average women earned 72.2% of what men earned. This means that in many entry-level positions in libraries, women earn less than men at even a worse ratio than the national average.

Traditionally male jobs in the municipal sector are typically higher paying than traditionally female jobs in the library sector, despite the equally valuable work that library workers contribute to society. Table 2 describes the varying hourly wage rates from entry-level positions in the municipal and library sectors. Entry-level municipal jobs that are traditionally male have wages that can be up to 38% higher than entry-level library jobs that are traditionally female. Additionally, these municipal jobs have a workweek that is over 10% longer than the typical workweek for library workers, leading to higher pay.

<sup>3</sup> Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Statistics Canada, 2006.

**Table 2: Comparison of Entry Level Hourly Wages  
of Municipal and Library Workers, 2006**

<u>City</u>	<u>Local &amp; Employer</u>	<u>Job Title</u>	<u>Start Rate 2006</u>	<u>Top Rate 2006</u>	<u>Years to Max Rate</u>	<u>Hours/ Week</u>
Vancouver	CUPE 1004 & City of Vancouver	Labourer I	\$21.08	\$21.08	0	40
	<i>CUPE 391 &amp; Vancouver Public Library Board</i>	<i>Library Assistant I</i>	<i>\$15.31</i>	<i>\$17.88</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>35</i>
Burnaby	CUPE 23 & City of Burnaby	Labourer	\$20.76	\$20.76	0	40
	<i>CUPE 23 &amp; Burnaby Public Library Board</i>	<i>Library Clerk 2</i>	<i>\$16.52</i>	<i>\$19.37</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>35</i>
Surrey	CUPE 402 & The City of Surrey	Labourer	\$20.96	\$20.96	0	40
	<i>CUPE 402 &amp; Surrey Public Library Board</i>	<i>Branch Assistant</i>	<i>\$18.11</i>	<i>\$18.67</i>	<i>1/2</i>	<i>35</i>
North Vancouver	CUPE 389 & City of North Vancouver	Labourer 1	\$20.76	\$20.76	0	40
	<i>CUPE 389 &amp; North Vancouver City Library Board</i>	<i>Circulation Assistant</i>	<i>\$16.52</i>	<i>\$19.37</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>35</i>
Fraser Valley	CUPE 774 & City of Abbotsford	Labourer	\$17.63	\$20.74	1/2	40
	<i>CUPE 1698 &amp; Fraser Valley Regional Library</i>	<i>Circulation Assistant</i>	<i>\$18.75</i>	<i>\$19.27</i>	<i>1/2</i>	<i>35</i>

Sources: CUPE Collective Agreements

CUPE Research

While there is significant variance between entry-level library and labourer positions in municipalities, it is clear that there is also great wage variance between entry-level municipal library workers' wages and library workers in K-12 and post-secondary libraries, many of whom have benefited from pay equity gains in the last decade. Table 3 demonstrates the significant wage discrepancies between these library sites.

**Table 3: Comparison of Entry Level Hourly Wages  
of Municipal and Educational Library Workers, 2006**

<b><u>City</u></b>	<b><u>Local &amp; Employer</u></b>	<b><u>Job Title</u></b>	<b><u>Start Rate 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Top Rate 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Years to Max Rate</u></b>	<b><u>Hours/ Week</u></b>
Vancouver	CUPE 391 & Vancouver Public Library Board	Library Assistant I	\$15.31	\$18.88	3	35
	CUPE 15 & Langara College	Library Assistant (b)	\$18.74	\$21.20	5	35
Surrey	CUPE 728 & Surrey School Board	Library Technician	\$22.89	\$22.89	0	32
	CUPE 402 & Surrey Public Library Board	Branch Assistant	\$18.11	\$18.67	1/2	35
Fraser Valley	UCFV Faculty/Staff Association & University College of the Fraser Valley	Library Clerk	\$18.32	\$21.13	6	35
	CUPE 1698 & Fraser Valley Regional Library	Circulation Assistant	\$18.75	\$19.27	1/2	35

Sources: CUPE Collective Agreements

CUPE Research

As with entry-level library workers, librarians in the municipal sector generally make less than librarians in the post-secondary and federal government sectors. The average of maximum hourly pay rates (based on 35 hours/week over 52 weeks) of the highest wage librarian positions in Vancouver, Port Moody, Coquitlam, Burnaby, North Vancouver, Surrey and Richmond is significantly lower than what comparable library positions in the federal government earn after the large Public Service Alliance of Canada pay equity settlement of 1999. Also, municipal librarians earn significantly less than the average librarian salaries at UBC and SFU, and the maximum library salary at Capilano and Douglas colleges.

**Table 4: Maximum Librarian Hourly Wages in the GVRD  
Compared to the Post-Secondary and Federal Government Sectors, 2005**

<b><u>Location</u></b>	<b><u>Maximum Hourly Wage</u></b>
Average of 7 GVRD Cities	\$31.35
PSAC Federal Government, LS-2	\$33.59
SFU	\$39.00
UBC	\$39.53
Capilano and Douglas Colleges	\$41.06

Sources: CUPE, PSAC, College Collective Agreements, CAUT

CUPE Research

## Long Term Wage Gap

When exploring the pay discrepancy between municipal and library jobs over time, we see startling inequality between traditionally male and female jobs. Table 5 demonstrates that women in entry-level library jobs earn tens of thousands of dollars less than traditionally male municipal labourer jobs. In Burnaby, where there are 5 increments over 3 years, entry-level workers have the best chance of coming close to matching municipal wage rates, as the annual wage gap is less than \$10,000. Still, this position is paid just 82% of a comparable municipal position. Ultimately, as Table 5 indicates, increments end up discriminating against library positions. Labourer positions often have no increments so workers reach the maximum wage immediately. Workers in many library positions must wait up to 3 years to achieve maximum pay rates.

The table indicates that over 3 years, entry-level library jobs are paid between \$21,000 and \$41,000 less than comparable municipal jobs. This income is enough for a down payment on a house or condominium, or for putting 1 or 2 children through university.

**Table 5: Annual, Proportional and Cumulative Wage Gap  
Between Entry Level Municipal and Library Workers, 2006**

<u>City</u>	<u>Job Title</u>	<u>Annual Salary: Start</u>	<u>Wage Gap</u>	<u>Wage Gap Ratio</u>	<u>Annual Salary: Max</u>	<u>Wage Gap</u>	<u>Wage Gap Ratio</u>	<u>Years to Max</u>	<u>Gap Over 3 Years</u>
Vancouver	Labourer I <i>Library Assistant I</i>	\$43,996.49 \$27,959.58	\$16,036.91	0.64	\$43,996.49 \$32,652.99	\$11,343.50	0.74	0 3	\$41,070.61
Burnaby	Labourer <i>Library Clerk 2</i>	\$43,328.61 \$30,169.32	\$13,159.29	0.70	\$43,328.61 \$35,374.08	\$7,954.54	0.82	0 3	\$31,670.74
Surrey	Labourer <i>Branch Assistant</i>	\$43,746.04 \$33,584.37	\$10,161.67	0.77	\$43,746.04 \$34,095.71	\$9,650.32	0.78	0 1/2	\$29,462.31
North Vancouver	Labourer 1  <i>Circulation Assistant</i>	\$43,328.61 \$30,169.32	\$13,159.29	0.70	\$43,328.61 \$35,374.08	\$7,954.54	0.82	0 3	\$31,670.74
Fraser Valley	Labourer  <i>Circulation Assistant</i>	\$40,041.40 \$34,716.63	\$5,324.76	0.87	\$43,286.87 \$35,191.45	\$8,095.42	0.81	1/2 1/2	\$21,515.60

Sources: CUPE Collective Agreements

CUPE Research

## Pay Equity Throughout Canada

Library workers have benefited from pay equity elsewhere in Canada for over a decade. Pay equity legislation in Ontario led to job evaluation in Mississauga in the late 1990s. There, a Library Assistant II saw a \$5,000 increase in salary, while Senior Librarians, received a \$10,000 increase in salary. In Toronto, entry-level library workers received pay equity improvements of 24%, while other positions improved by 17-20%. Similar pay equity gains applied to Ontario provincial library employees. Federally, library

workers benefited from the PSAC Pay Equity court settlement more than any other group in PSAC: averaging more than \$5,000 more per year.

Municipal librarians in Vancouver and Toronto have seen an increasing gap in their wages after Ontario pay equity legislation, as Table 6 indicates. There is a \$7/hour wage gap for librarians in these locations. Further, it takes 25% longer for GVRD librarians to reach the maximum wage level than librarians in Toronto.

**Table 6: Comparison of Hourly Wage Rates  
of Librarians in Toronto and the GVRD, 2006**

<b><u>Location</u></b>	<b><u>Starting Hourly Wage</u></b>	<b><u>Maximum Hourly Wage</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Steps</u></b>	<b><u>Years to Max</u></b>
Toronto	\$30.84	\$34.84	4	3
GVRD	\$23.70	\$27.90	5	4
Wage Gap	\$7.14	\$6.94		

Sources: CUPE Collective Agreements

*CUPE Research*

Library workers in municipal, provincial and federal jurisdictions have all gained from job evaluation and pay equity gains. Gender-based pay discrimination is still present in Canada, but the good news is that when bargaining groups agree to assess such discrimination, they have begun to address discriminatory pay practices.

## **Seeking Pay Equity in Libraries**

Percentage wage increases are always valuable. But in the case of gender-based pay discrimination, even if library workers received the same rate of pay increases in a new settlement, that gain would do nothing to reduce the gender gap in pay. In fact, when percentage increases in wages occur the gender gap in wages actually increases!

Pay equity is the best way to address gender discrimination. Gender-neutral point-weighted job evaluation and comparing male and female wage lines are critical elements in achieving equity. Addressing job factors like skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions can lead to pay rates that do not discriminate against workers in traditionally female jobs. Other tools to achieve pay equity include across the board wage increases, eliminating increments and increasing base pay.

## **Job Evaluation Gains in Pay Equity**

Even when an employer and bargaining unit are not explicitly pursuing a pay equity program, there can be spin-off benefits for workers in traditionally female jobs through job evaluation. Port Moody and CUPE 825 are implementing a gender-neutral job evaluation plan on July 1, 2007. Through the job evaluation, virtually all library positions will receive pay increases of \$1-3 per hour. This is an indication of what happens when library positions are fairly measured against other municipal positions.



## Conclusions

Library workers are undervalued and underpaid. Many earn so little they live below the poverty line and many who earn more are in the ranks of the working poor.

Historically, jobs that have a high concentration of female employees have lower pay than jobs with higher concentrations of men. Library jobs are in this category.

Library employees are among the few B.C. public sector workers who have seen no pay equity gains in the last decade.

Gender-based wage discrimination is unacceptable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a society we must address it by evaluating and rewarding jobs based on the nature of the work not the typical gender of the person providing the work. Women and men who choose to work providing the valuable public services in libraries deserve better.

Library workers who have been fortunate enough to work for municipal, provincial or federal bodies that have begun pay equity programs are already experiencing greater wage justice. It will be easier to recruit and retain skilled library workers when they know they are not being discriminated against with each pay cheque they receive. All B.C. library workers deserve to achieve the same gains as other library workers have in escaping the pink ghetto.