

NORTHBROOK PUBLIC LIBRARY SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

October 4, 2023 | 7:30 p.m.

Northbrook Public Library | Pollak AB

Special Meeting Agenda

- 1 Call Special Meeting to Order – Mr. Jay Glaubinger
- 2 Board of Trustees Roll Call – Ms. Hall
- 3 Approval of the Agenda – Mr. Jay Glaubinger
- 4 Public Comments
- 5 Unfinished Business
 - 5.1 Lily Zheng EDI Report Presentation
 - 5.2 Staff Comments for Board Follow-up
- 6 New Business
- 7 Adjourn

Community members wishing to respectfully share thoughts about any matter concerning the Northbrook Public Library may do so during Public Comments as outlined in the [Public Comment Policy](#). The Board will not immediately respond to public comments or engage in open dialogue due to time constraints, but we are of course actively listening to your thoughts, comments, and suggestions. If follow-up communication is necessary, a staff member will contact you following the meeting. Thank you for your understanding of these guidelines.

FINAL VOTE OR ACTION MAY BE TAKEN AT THE MEETING ON ANY AGENDA ITEM SUBJECT MATTER LISTED ABOVE, UNLESS THE AGENDA LINE ITEM SPECIFICALLY STATES OTHERWISE.

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Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Survey Findings and Report **2023 Baseline**

Insights and Recommendations
for Future Action

Zheng Consulting

Lily Zheng
Alexis Victor

September 28, 2023

Executive Summary

Key Findings

Highly Effective and Engaged Staff

Library staff are highly motivated and engaged to work at the library, citing extremely positive within-department experiences. Compared to benchmark, library staff report exceptionally higher opportunities, support, resources, and higher perceived pay equity.

Strong Shared EDI Commitment, But Low Capacity Library-Wide

While virtually all staff are aligned on the need for EDI work, burnout is high and capacity is low across the library. This challenge is exacerbated by ongoing pandemic- and sociopolitical-related stress. Staff undertaking EDI-related workstreams find the workload unsustainable, and feel that without changes to how EDI work is distributed, even work that most staff agree is valuable will be unable to be carried out.

Staff-Administrative Management Inequity Drives Overall Inequity

While there are a small number of demographic-related inequities by race and sexuality, the largest driver of overall EDI challenges is the inequity between administrative management and other staff, which influences other inequities at the library. Administrative management's perception of the current state of the library is misaligned with staff perceptions, leading to challenges with EDI decision-making, communication, and implementation.

Unspoken Consequences In Lieu of Healthy Feedback or Accountability Processes

When issues with projects, performance, or interpersonal relationships arise, particularly at the manager level and above, leaders may default to taking one-sided action to change the outcome rather than openly communicate. For example, in reaction to a perceived incorrect decision taken by a manager, an administrative manager may respond by reducing the decision-making autonomy or requiring more formal permission or sign-off of similar decisions for that manager alone without communicating the reason. While this practice reduces outright conflict, it can damage trust and morale for the affected managers and/or departments and exacerbate inequity.

Over-Scoping and Over-Management of Library-Wide Projects

Library-wide projects are highly criticized by staff. The high number of projects, the heavy reliance on library staff to undertake them, the relative lack of input staff have into project selection and prioritization, and the heavy involvement of administrative management in project minutiae results in a high risk of staff burnout. Staff are strongly aligned on the perception that projects are improperly resourced and rarely completed in a timely manner.

Strategic Recommendations

The library should seek staff feedback on library-wide projects and pause the projects with the worst impact:effort ratio as soon as it is able to, for at least one year.

Across the board, library staff are overextended by work that isn't included in their job descriptions. While to some extent the emotional burden of this work can be mitigated with better communication and transparency, the most impactful way to increase staff capacity and overall project efficacy requires *doing less*. To ensure that the library maintains a focus on the highest-impact projects, administrative management should survey library staff and commit to pausing at least half of ongoing projects so the remainder can be properly prioritized.

The library should formalize and communicate the decision-making roles and responsibilities of different library constituents.

To ensure that staff are aligned on the different roles and responsibilities of non-manager staff, managers, administrative management, and the board, HR should take the lead in formally documenting and communicating this information to staff. This documentation can also be used as a guide to assess whether de facto decision-making processes or staff responsibilities align with expectations, and if they do not, inform changemaking efforts to rectify inequities.

The library should invest in management, communication, and feedback upskilling for administrative management.

To improve administrative management's ability to effectively and consistently collaborate, communicate, and lead in an inclusive and equitable way for the library, the NPL should invest in evidence-based management, feedback, and communication training for them. To ensure accountability for learning and improvement, specific questions can be added to their existing performance evaluation or to the 2024 EDI survey for staff to assess improvement.

The library should reassess and redistribute EDI-related workstreams between the volunteer EDI committee, managers, and administrative management, with HR and managers taking a greater role in the process.

Given the high volume of EDI-related work, the EDI committee, managers, and administrative management should work together to document and redistribute EDI workstreams to share the responsibility and distribute the burden appropriately. For example, the EDI committee can take on EDI event programming, managers can take on integrating EDI into their departmental work, and administrative management can take on EDI-related library-wide policies, processes, and culture. In particular, the NPL could benefit from a stronger HR presence to own personnel-related work, including many EDI-related workstreams.

The library should organize and engage in regular staff dialogues with peer institutions.

Either every quarter or twice a year, the library should organize recurring facilitated dialogues with other libraries facing similar challenges on topics including staff wellness, burnout prevention, and patron-related best practices. These dialogues can help staff build community, share and gain perspectives on EDI and related work, and develop in their roles.

Introduction

In late-Q2 2022, Northbrook Public Library (NPL) engaged with Zheng Consulting (ZC), a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion consulting and assessment firm, to develop and administer a two-year EDI assessment, following exploratory assessment work conducted by The Blackberry Collection (TBC), another EDI consulting firm. Zheng Consulting built on TBC's previous work to create a customized EDI survey via the CultureAmp platform and supplemented the data it collected with TBC's After Action Report, follow-up conversations with library managers, the chairs of the EDI committee, and members of administrative management, and additional anonymous staff feedback submitted through a Google Form.

This report summarizes: 1) Northbrook Public Library's 2023 Baseline Survey development and key factors, 2) high-level survey results and the Research Questions developed in response by Zheng Consulting 3) Zheng Consulting's deep dive analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, and 4) Zheng Consulting's recommendations for action and next steps.

Survey Development & Factors

For many of its EDI assessment projects, Zheng Consulting first conducts an exploratory assessment to understand the issues most relevant to an organization, then customizes its surveys to reflect these priorities. For the Northbrook Public Library, ZC opted to skip this exploratory assessment due to the prior work that The Blackberry Collection, another EDI consulting firm, had completed. Noting the tension following the end of NPL's partnership with TBC, ZC chose to instead gauge library staff's willingness to share additional feedback. This survey revealed that while a notable percent of library staff had lost trust in administrative management, staff largely trusted the EDI committee, their managers, and ZC to undertake additional EDI work. Based on this feedback, ZC proceeded with the baseline assessment.

For this next stage of EDI work, how much do you trust that library administration will help the NPL make progress?

49 responses

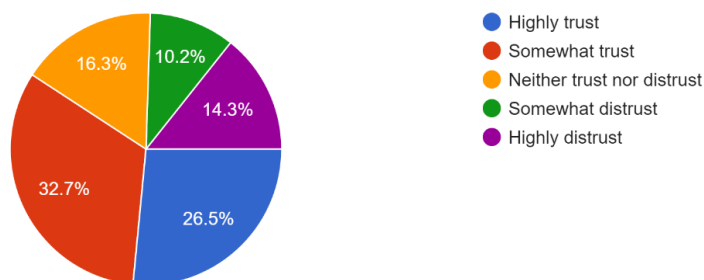


Figure 1. Of the staff that responded to the Zheng Consulting Trust Survey, roughly 60% trusted library administrative management, with roughly 25% distrusting or highly distrusting.

For this next stage of EDI work, how much do you trust that Lily will help the NPL make progress?
49 responses

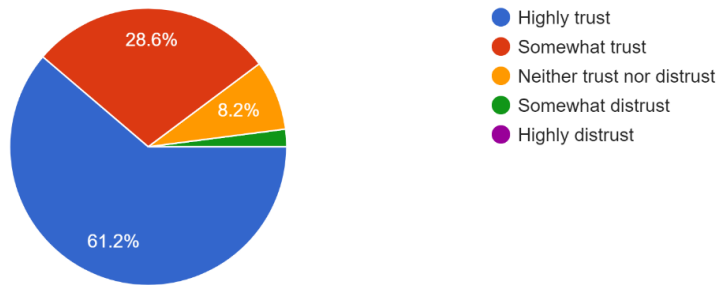


Figure 2. Of the staff that responded to the Zheng Consulting Trust Survey, roughly 90% trusted Lily and Zheng Consulting, with 2% distrusting or highly distrusting.

ZC took additional effort to ensure that the Zheng Consulting EDI survey recognized and built on the previous work undertaken by TBC. The final survey, which also integrated feedback from library partners working with ZC (Kate Hall, Michelle Mistalski, and Sara Scodius) consisted of 34 rating questions, 3 qualitative questions, 7 demographic questions, and 4 organizational questions. Rating questions collected data on 9 factors:

Belonging: The degree to which people feel valued, respected, part of a greater whole and safe to take risks or fail.

Voice: The degree to which people feel safe offering feedback and feel it is taken seriously.

Fairness: The degree to which people feel equally treated and evaluated.

Enablement: The degree to which people feel supported to succeed in their jobs.

Decision Making: The degree to which people feel represented and included in decisions impacting them.

Representation: The degree to which people feel their workplace and leadership is set up to reflect their community.

Leadership: The degree to which leaders are succeeding at ensuring a respectful workplace, offering feedback and coaching, and enabling a functional workplace.

Engagement: The degree to which people feel positively toward and participate in the workplace.

Community: The degree to which community members (patrons) feel included and members of the organizations feel supported in interacting with them.

The survey ran for two weeks and collected 90 responses for a high total response rate of 90%. Survey findings can be found on the following page.

Survey Findings

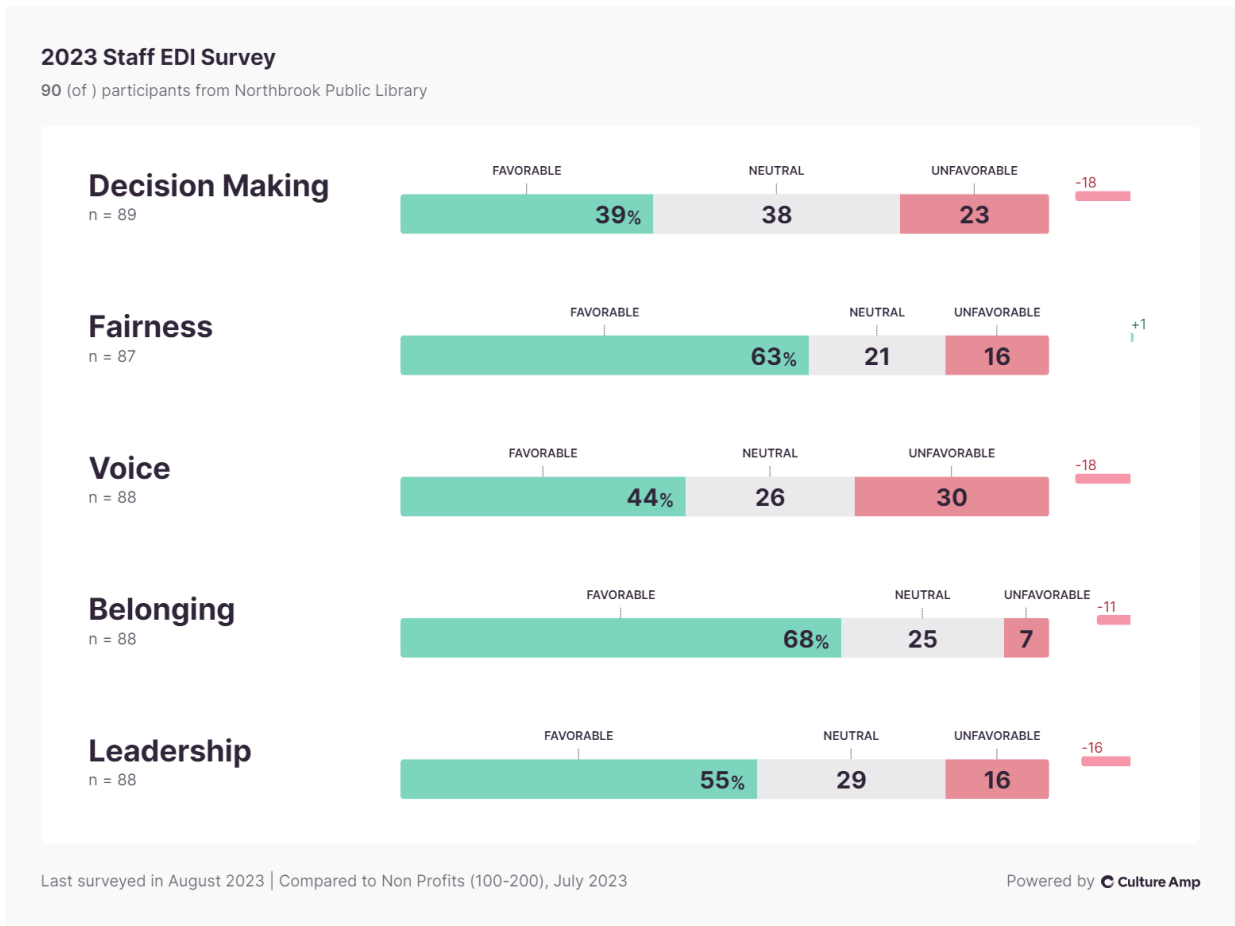


Figure 3. An overview of the five most impactful factors on the 2023 DEI Survey. Green scores indicate the percentage of positive responses. Grey scores indicate neutral responses, and red scores indicate negative responses. The Comparison column lists the degree to which NPL's scores differ from the benchmark for similar organizations.

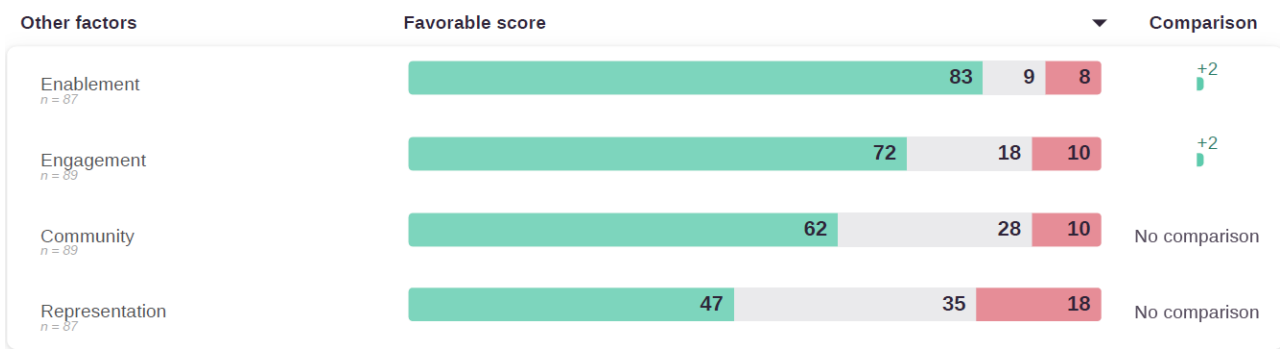


Figure 4. An overview of the four remaining factors and their scores on the 2023 DEI Survey, Enablement (83% positive), Engagement (72% positive), Community (62% positive), and Representation (47% positive).

The areas in which the Northbrook Public library is exceeding benchmark are primarily in **Fairness, Enablement, and Engagement**. Staff reported high access to opportunity and high access to the resources, tools, and information needed to do their jobs well. Staff shared feeling highly motivated and engaged to do their best while working at the library. While staff scores on pay fairness were higher than benchmark, it is worth noting that the score was still under 60%.

Focus	Impact	Question	Factor	Favorable score	Trend	Comparison
	VERY HIGH	When there are career opportunities at the library, I am aware of them	Fairness n = 88	6 77 13 1	No trend	+22
	VERY HIGH	I have access to the resources, tools, and information I need to do my job duties well	Enablement n = 88	7 90	No trend	+16
	HIGH	I am motivated and engaged to do my best working here	Engagement n = 89	12 74 19	No trend	+9
	HIGH	I believe that my total compensation (base salary+any bonuses+benefits) is fair, relative to similar staff roles here	Fairness n = 88	17 57 25 18	No trend	+7

Figure 5. Scores for the questions on the survey where the library scored higher than benchmark. “When there are career opportunities at the library, I am aware of them” (77% positive, 22 points more than benchmark), “I have access to the things I need to do my job duties well” (90% positive, 16 points more than benchmark), “I am motivated and engaged to do my best” (74% positive, 9 points more than benchmark), and “I believe that my total compensation is fair, relative to similar roles” (57% positive, 7 points more than benchmark). See accompanying CultureAmp full questions report for all questions and their scores.



Figure 6. Scores for the question, “I would recommend the NPL as a great place to work” (83% positive).

An important metric called an employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) is calculated by subtracting the percentage of neutral or negative scores from the percentage of strongly positive scores, to identify the percentage of staff likely to highly recommend working at the NPL. A “good” eNPS is 10-30, and a “great” eNPS is 30-50. The library’s eNPS score is **11** (28% strongly positive, 17% neutral or unfavorable), putting it at risk of not being able to attract top talent.

The NPL has a number of areas where it is substantially below benchmark, with the largest challenges in **Leadership, Voice, and Decision Making**. Staff reported a poor or ambiguous relationship to the board, were highly critical of project resourcing, and noted poor two-way communication, decision making, and safety to share critical feedback.



Figure 7. Scores for the questions on the survey where the library scored the most lower than benchmark. See alt text for specific questions and their scores, and the accompanying CultureAmp full questions report for all questions and scores.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Following the Demographic Analysis, Zheng Consulting reviewed the 181 qualitative answers to the 3 narrative questions, the 341 additional comments left on individual questions the CultureAmp survey, the dozen or so additional comments from anonymous feedback forms, and additional comments shared during supplementary focus groups with staff of various levels at the library.

All data was analyzed using a **Grounded Theory Methodology** in which holistic interpretations of each data point on its own, then in the context of all other comments, form emergent patterns in the data that are developed and evolve as more data is analyzed. Where patterns contradicted each other (e.g., comments indicated the presence of *both* strongly positive and strongly negative experiences with administrative management), additional interpretations of the data were explored (e.g., staff experience of administrative management is generalized from their relationship with the specific member of administrative management they engage with most frequently).

1. Strong Staff-Manager Relationship, At a Cost

Nearly every positive comment left on the survey referenced the strong relationships, support, trust, and camaraderie staff felt toward their managers and within their departments, but managers themselves shared common concerns of burnout, exclusion from decision-making, and challenging relationships with administrative management.

“My manager is genuinely empathetic and interested in how I am doing.”

“My manager is very supportive and helpful to all of us in this department.”

“When people are upset about a decision made by administrative management, then managers end up being the ones who need to address it.”

2. Dysfunctional Library-Wide Decision Making

Library-wide decisions were widely critiqued as being opaque, unresponsive, and disingenuous. A common concern is that decisions are “pre-decided,” but staff are still solicited for feedback in the hopes that they will “organically come to” the pre-decided decision. This pushes staff, especially those with marginalized identities, to disconnect from decision making processes or simply “give up” on sharing their disagreement. Staff also shared concerns about the heavy delays affecting library-wide decisions and the implementation of feedback, noting that decisions that they expected could be made at the manager level would frequently go through multiple rounds of administrative management review before being made.

“Feedback processes are often performative: I’m being included, but the decision is already made.”

“We seem to swing from asking for lots of input on things that are unimportant to staff, to asking for no input on things that could affect staff greatly.”

“Decision-makers are relying on being able to ‘empathize’ with marginalized groups instead of giving them a seat at the table.”

3. Inconsistent Distribution of Resources and Responsibilities

Several staff members shared the perception that resources, workload, remote working benefits, and decision-making influence differs by department, and that valuable resources seem allocated for unclear or inconsistent reasons. Some staff shared stories of colleagues receiving preferential treatment due to having a library degree, while others shared stories of colleagues being underpaid compared to others despite having both more degrees and more experience. A common theme was the perception of favoritism and inconsistent process once administrative management gets involved, in which formal processes can both deny some staff/departments requests for changes to resources, remote working benefits, roles, or responsibilities, but also be waived for some staff/departments without explanation. Administration management shared their awareness of this and discussed the value of additional and more consistently applied processes.

"There are opportunities that were created for specific people in mind and regardless of whether or not they were shared internally, those who applied were rejected."

"The way workloads are divided depends on how friendly you are with administrative management."

"There's so much work being delegated that employees no longer know what administration, managers, or assistant managers do anymore."

"Our processes are not being maintained or overseen to make sure they're being consistently applied."

4. Burnout from the Quantity and Management of Library-Wide Projects

Staff members, including but not limited to EDI committee volunteers, shared the same interpretation that library-wide projects are often taken on regardless of staff wishes and over-assigned to a small pool of library staff volunteers, with universal staff burnout listed as the single biggest obstacle to successful EDI work. Several comments indicated that while they assumed many of these projects could have been primarily led and undertaken by administrative management, with opportunities for input from staff, in actuality the dynamic is reversed. Most projects are primarily delegated to a volunteer staff to undertake (with a relatively small group of consistent volunteers), but are slowed down by cumbersome administrative management approval processes, and disengagement from other staff. These dynamics contribute to frustration and lower staff morale.

"Most of our major projects ultimately depend on the same small pool of people leading and completing most of the work, while other staff consistently disengage."

"It is impossible for us to create enough space to complete projects, because everything is important and everything needs to happen immediately. Staff are burned out and no one has the bandwidth."

"We do not sufficiently conclude one project before starting others. Rather than taking time to research and decide if a request or complaint is worth addressing and if we have the time and resources to do it, projects are started without any real idea of what they will involve."

"While we are told we can say no to new projects or programs, oftentimes we are also instructed by administration to work on projects they deem a high priority without asking for feedback about capacity first from staff."

5. Low Psychological Safety Stemming from Lack of Trust

The lack of trust in administrative management was a core theme in the qualitative data, with staff attributing their lack of trust to low transparency, poor responses to conflict or critique, project-related decisions (to start or end projects) and the perceived practice of administrative management making important resourcing or even employment decisions based on their liking or disliking of individual staff members. Few staff members feel safe sharing contrary opinions or critical feedback. Many staff cite their fear of retaliation as a primary reason, with a small number of comments indicating personal experiences of being treated differently by administrative management after sharing critique or engaging in conflict. As a result, conflict or critique tends to occur informally and passively, rather than directly. While members of administrative management are aware of this and indicate their intention to build trust and welcome critique, this intention isn't yet aligned with the existing impact.

"Many staff fear retaliation for voicing opinions that do not support administrative management's decisions."

"Oftentimes critical information is shared too late and once rumors and side discussions have already begun among staff, making it harder to counter misinformation."

"Sometimes members of administrative management will voice their opinion, and then ask for a vote. Most people will not feel safe voicing a contrary opinion. How can you get an honest vote if everyone already knows how administrative management wants the vote to go?"

6. Lack of Administrative Management Cohesion

A surprising proportion of staff, including members of administrative management themselves, mentioned the lack of alignment among the administrative management team. Different communication styles, working relationships, and decision-making styles among the team lead to challenges engaging with the staff community at large, with individual staff-related interactions, and with library-wide decision-making. Because staff often have preferences in which members of administrative management they seek out or communicate with, and members of administrative management can be more or less proactive with sharing this information with other administrative managers, the overall communication and decision-making of this team can feel severely impaired.

"I'm unsure of what is happening with administrative management for them to not all be on the same page when they speak to the rest of the employees. It often sounds like three different answers, or no answers at all."

"I can't answer whether I feel respected by administrative management as a whole. I feel varying levels of respect from each one of them."

"One member of administrative management has always answered my questions and been helpful for me, but other members of administrative management seemed like they didn't understand things that were their responsibility to, and couldn't answer my questions."

These qualitative themes, in conjunction with comprehensive quantitative data analysis, were used to fully address and answer the 10 Research Questions.

Demographic Analysis

This analysis shows the average difference between the highest-scoring group and the lowest-scoring group for each demographic or organizational category. The larger the score, the more inequity. Scores with an asterisk (*) next to them are not statistically significant (meaning that they are not likely to be reflective of systemic inequities at the library).

Category	Variation	Context
Department	47.8 pts	Worse experiences for Maker Services; better experiences for Administration & Events Production
Race	31.8 pts	Worse experiences for members of 2 or more races; no other systemic racial disparities
Staff/Mgr/Admin Mgmt	31.6 pts	Better experiences for Administrative Management; similarly worse experiences for Managers ¹ and Staff
Age	25.9 pts	Worse experiences for staff between 25-34, no other systemic age-related disparities
LGBTQ+	17.8 pts	Worse experiences for LGBTQ+ staff, particularly in Decision-Making, Engagement, and Representation
Tenure*	17.2 pts	
Income*	17 pts	
Disability*	14.6 pts	
Caregiver Status*	10.7 pts	
Hybrid/Remote*	6 pts	
Religion*	5.8	
Gender*	3.8 pts	

Figure 8. Survey factors, ranked by their impact on inequity at the NPL. Factors marked with an asterisk have point variations that are not statistically significant.

On average, analyzing any data from two or more groups will reveal some differences. For example, the Decision Making score for White staff is 42 out of 100, and for Asian staff it is 37. While both these scores are low, one is 5 points higher than the other. To determine whether the difference in scores is due to a *systemic inequity* or within the realm of “normal,” Zheng Consulting applies a statistical analysis to all survey scores by demographic traits (gender, race, LGBTQ+ status, disability, caretaker status, religion, income), and organizational traits (department, tenure, manager/non-manager/admin management, and hybrid vs. remote).

¹ Managers refers to anyone at NPL who supervises other staff and is not a member of the Administrative Management team, including supervisors, assistant managers, and managers.

Zheng Consulting found systemic inequities by **department**, with Maker Services having significantly worse experiences than other departments and Administration and Events Production having significantly better experiences than other departments, and by **administrative management status**, with administrative managers having significantly more positive experiences than both managers and non-manager staff.

We also identified isolated inequities by **race**, with members of two or more races having significantly worse experiences than staff from all other racial backgrounds (no disparities were found between any other racial groups), **age**, with staff between 25-34 years old having significantly worse experiences than staff from all other age groups. Finally, we found inconclusive evidence of inequities by **LGBTQ+** status, with the possibility that LGBTQ+ staff have worse experiences than non-LGBTQ+ staff. We explored this issue further in our deep dive.

Following the remainder of our analysis, we were able to conclude that staff do not experience *systemic* mistreatment or difference in their experiences due to their tenure, income, ability, caregiver status, hybrid vs. remote status, religion, or gender. Keep in mind that this analysis aims to identify systemic, library-wide issues. Individual library staff may have experienced mistreatment on the basis of their gender, race, disability, caretaker status, income, LGBTQ+ identity, or age that aren't reflected in this analysis, and if so, ZC unequivocally recommends immediately resolving these incidents.

Research Questions

Initial data analysis, additional open questions related to scores on the sub-questions within each factor, and focus group feedback led Zheng Consulting developed **10 Research Questions** to guide our data deep-dive:

1. **Why does administrative management have such different experiences compared to other staff?**
2. **How does one's department impact a staff member's experience at the NPL?**
3. **What makes some staff fear retaliation for speaking up?**
4. **Why do some staff feel disrespected or devalued by the library board?**
5. **What prevents projects from being well-resourced and completed in a timely manner?**
6. **What drives how workloads are assigned?**
7. **What prevents the library's internal constituent groups (staff, administrative management, board) from being seen as representative or accountable to the community?**
8. **How does race impact a staff member's experience at the NPL?**
9. **What are the unique needs of patron-facing staff?**
10. **To what extent is there a generational gap at the NPL, and if so, how does it manifest?**

These Research Questions each dive deeper into an aspect of staff experiences integral to fully understanding NPL's EDI baseline. Each question is answered with both quantitative and qualitative data in order to direct the bulk of Zheng Consulting's in depth inquiry, and the process of answering Research Questions enables Zheng Consulting's Key Findings and Strategic Recommendations.

Research Results

To answer each of the ten research questions, Zheng Consulting conducted additional quantitative and qualitative analysis with all data (including the After Action report from The Blackberry Collection), cross-referencing where possible. Our answers to each research question are below.

1. Why do administrative management have such different experiences from other staff?

Across every single high-level factor, administrative management has dramatically more positive experiences, with the largest gaps in Decision Making (gap of 61 points), Voice (gap of 44 points), and Representation (gap of 34 points). These gaps occur consistently across both *personal experience* (meaning that admin management has more positive experiences) and *perception of NPL* (meaning that admin management is more likely to evaluate NPL as a whole more positively). For example, 100% of administrative management believe their total compensation is fair, and 100% of administrative management believe that people from all backgrounds are treated fairly at NPL. By comparison, roughly 60% of non-admin management staff believe their total compensation is fair, and roughly the same percentage believe that people from all backgrounds are treated fairly at NPL.

Factor	Overall	Non-Mgr	Mgr.	A. Mgmt	Factor	Benchmark	Non-Mgr	Mgr.	A. Mgmt
Decision Making	39	38	31	92	Decision Making	72	38	31	92
Fairness	63	61	59	85	Fairness	63	61	59	85
Voice	44	45	31	75	Voice	66	45	31	75
Community	62	64	53	83	Community	70	64	53	83
Enablement	83	85	69	92	Enablement	84	85	69	92
Belonging	68	68	62	81	Belonging	84	68	62	81
Leadership	55	55	51	80	Leadership	75	55	51	80
Engagement	72	72	69	83	Engagement	71	72	69	83
Representation	47	47	43	81	Representation	77	47	43	81
Internal NPL Comparison					Nonprofit 100-200 2023 Benchmark				

Figure 9. Breakdown of factor scores and benchmarks for administrative management, managers, and other staff.

Quantitative data suggests that there are substantial “objective” differences in access to decision-making and autonomy between administrative management and other staff, and possibly as a result, substantial differences in perceptions of fairness, psychological safety, and belonging. Qualitative data indicates that members of administrative management are aware of decision-making challenges, but may be underestimating these challenges’ impact on the workplace, the normality of these challenges, and the concern they cause staff.

As a note, where administrative management and other staff *do not* have substantially different experiences are in workload, burnout, and perception of communications. Administrative managers were just as likely as other staff to report feeling overwhelmed by their workload and burned out as a result, and were similarly critical of the library’s communications being “open, honest, and 2-way.”

2. How does one's department impact one's experience at the NPL?

2023 Staff EDI Survey

90 (of) participants from Northbrook Public Library

Department

		Overall Northbrook Public L.	Circulation	Adult Services	Technical Services	Youth Services	Administration	Maker Services	Not Specified	Events Production	Marketing and Cc	Maintenance
No. of responses	90	26	17	9	9	8	8	6	3	n/a	n/a	
Decision Making	39%	33	39	52	41	79	17	33	56	n/a	n/a	
Fairness	63%	70	64	64	62	78	35	48	80	n/a	n/a	
Voice	44%	53	39	44	41	76	4	33	78	n/a	n/a	
Community	62%	64	65	58	67	81	44	50	92	n/a	n/a	
Enablement	83%	85	96	78	93	76	63	67	89	n/a	n/a	
Belonging	68%	76	82	53	75	72	41	50	83	n/a	n/a	
Leadership	55%	59	58	49	60	77	38	48	73	n/a	n/a	
Engagement	72%	74	82	63	70	83	58	67	100	n/a	n/a	
Representation	47%	47	52	64	28	88	13	30	92	n/a	n/a	

Last surveyed in August 2023

Powered by  Culture Amp

Figure 10. Score breakdowns for all survey factors by department. Maker Services has notably lower scores, while Administration and Events Production have notably higher scores compared to other departments' whose scores are similar to each other.

While different departments have different experiences, we found that only a few of these differing experiences are due to specific department-related favoritism or antagonism. **In particular, we found strong inequities affecting Maker Services, which has more negative experiences compared to other departments and critically low scores in 7 out of 9 survey factors.** These negative experiences are attributed to greater barriers targeting members of the department (including longer periods of time required to authorize decisions), perceived retaliation and disrespect, and impositions on staff time from not only administrative management, but other departments.

Most other departments are treated similarly to one another, and experience common challenges including frustrations with how workloads are divided, exclusion from decision-making, and low safety to share critical opinions. Administration and Events Production both have extremely high scores in 8 out of 9 survey factors, but Administration's high scores are likely because it includes the four members of administrative management who have overwhelmingly positive experiences at the library. We were unable to find a clear explanation for Events Production's high scores, and cannot rule out the potential for these scores to be due to chance given the small number of people (3) who shared their experiences via the survey.

While these issues are unlikely to be directly tied to department-wide favoritism or antagonism, the survey showed a number of differences between departments. **Circulation** has a low score in Decision Making driven by low satisfaction with decision-making processes, exclusion from decision making, and exclusion of perspectives. **Adult Services** has the highest scores in Enablement and Engagement and the near highest score in Belonging compared to all other departments, but the lowest scores in evaluation of two-way communication, and low scores in perception of timely project completion. **Youth Services** had the lowest scores in perception of representation, access to information, and perception of timely project completion, but similarly high scores in Enablement and Belonging. **Technical Services** has the highest scores in Decision Making, but the lowest scores in Community, Enablement, Belonging, Leadership, and Engagement, driven by low perceptions of respect, challenges with manager feedback, and lack of support addressing patron conflict.

3. What makes some library staff fear retaliation for speaking up?

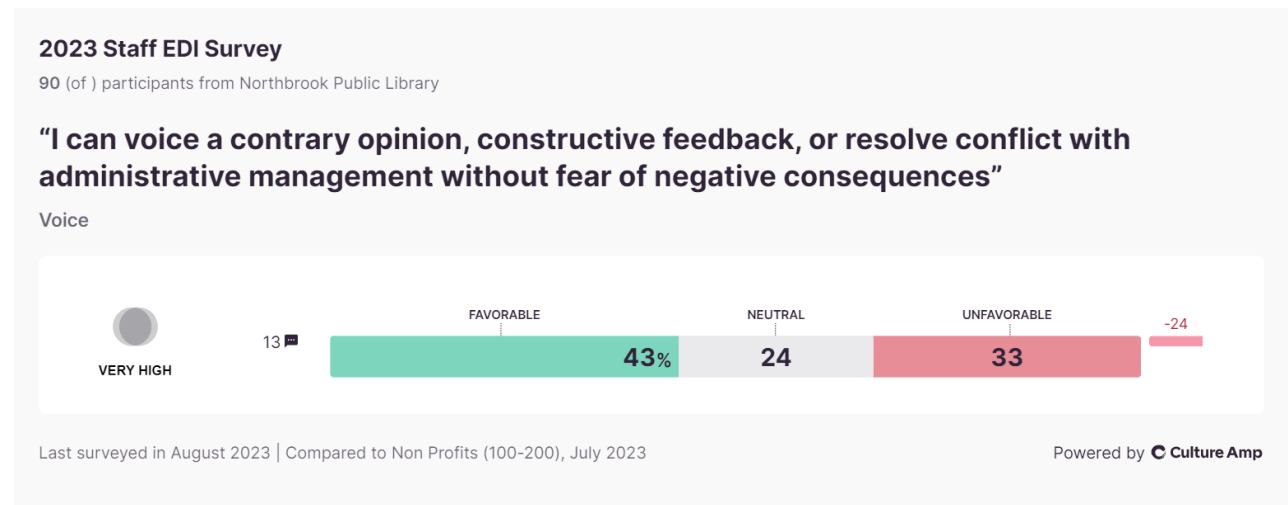


Figure 11. Score breakdown for "I can voice a contrary opinion, constructive feedback, or resolve conflict with administrative management without fear of negative consequences (43% positive, 24 points below benchmark).

Only 43% of library staff feel like they can disagree or share constructive feedback with administrative management without fear of retaliation, 24 points below benchmark. This occurs for several reasons:

1. **Library Culture of Conflict Avoidance**, where even between peers the default is often to share feedback indirectly, passively, or not at all.
2. **Low Transparency and Inconsistent Communication**, where the default approach is for administrative management to share little information regarding issues (like sudden terminations), even when it may affect many staff members.
3. **Staff Experiences of Retaliation**, where real incidents of administrative management responding poorly occur, and then become magnified as they are passed around by staff as a warning. This is exacerbated for staff who may already not feel as supported at the library, with lower scores for hybrid staff (18) compared to in-person staff (46), and Asian, Latine, or mixed staff (33, 20, and 20, respectively) compared to White staff (47).

While some attempts from administrative management have been made to repair trust and working relationships, these efforts have not yet succeeded.

4. Why do staff feel disrespected or devalued by the library board?

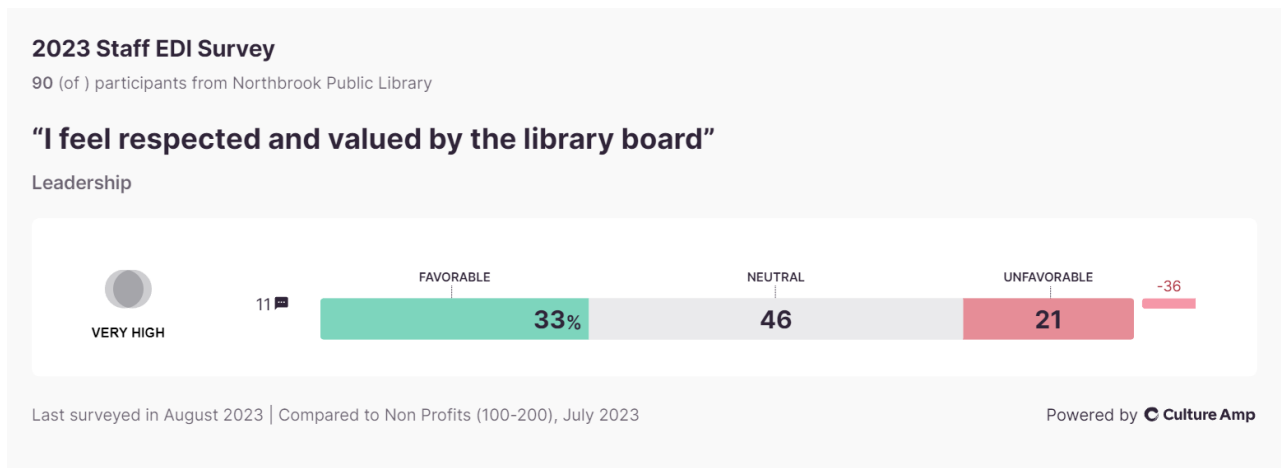


Figure 12. Score breakdown for "I feel respected and valued by the library board (33% positive, 36 points below benchmark).

In general, only 33% of staff actively feel respected and valued by the library board, with 46% of staff not having enough of a relationship with the board to answer positively or negatively, and 21% of staff feeling actively disrespected and devalued by the board. This question had the largest neutral scores out of all the survey questions, likely because many staff don't have a relationship with the board or board members, and don't expect to have such a relationship.

However, we found that the negative scores are likely tied to specific interactions staff members have witnessed during streamed board meetings, involving individual board members making disrespectful comments about staff members or marginalized groups. These incidents may be shared by staff who, in looking for support and affirmation from the board, were concerned that they found the opposite.

We also found that some frustration directed at the board related to staff feeling like there wasn't a strong advocate for staff during board meetings, and no one during board meetings that actively pushed back when disrespectful comments are made about staff members.

5. What prevents projects from being well-resourced and completed in a timely manner?



Figure 13. Score breakdown for “Important projects, including EDI projects, are well-resourced and completed in a timely manner” (33% positive, 25 points below benchmark).

Perceptions of project resourcing and timeliness are split dramatically by role, with 29% of non-management staff and 20% of managers feeling positively, but 100% of administrative management feeling positively. Because some staff members remarked that slow project completion times were normal for library environments, we conducted an additional analysis into tenure, expecting that if mismatched expectations were the issue, people with a longer tenure at Northbrook would feel more positively about project resources and timelines.

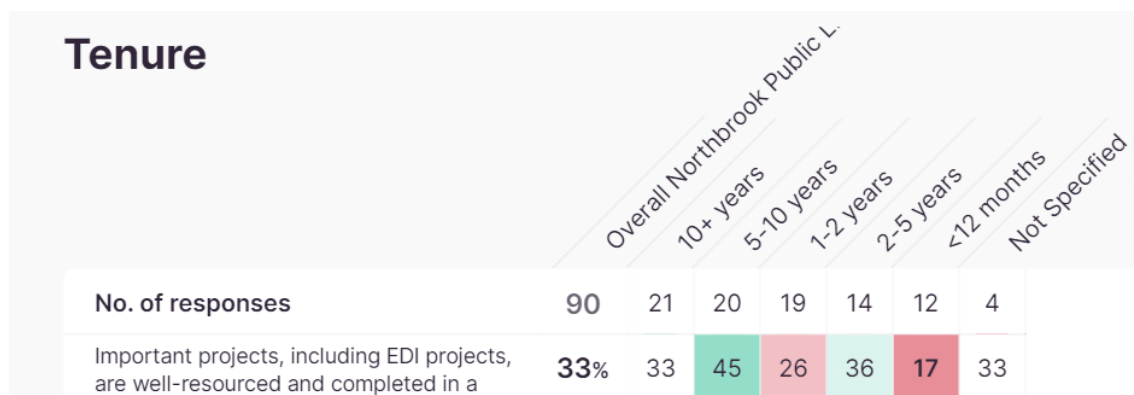


Figure 14. Score breakdown for “Important projects, including EDI projects, are well-resourced and completed in a timely manner” by tenure. All scores are under 50%.

Notably, while all groups scored under 50—indicating that project resourcing and timeliness was perceived to be an issue by staff of every tenure level—staff who have worked at the library for less than 2 years have the lowest scores. This suggests that both interpretations hold weight: that some newer staff’s expectations may be higher for how long library-wide projects may take, but at the same time, the challenges that all staff indicate are very much real. The high volume of library-wide projects, the assignment of projects despite staff capacity or interest, the overwork of a small pool of the same staff volunteers, the high delegation of project minutiae to volunteers, and the heavy requirement of administrative management approval and oversight all contribute to the problem. .

6. What drives how workloads are assigned?

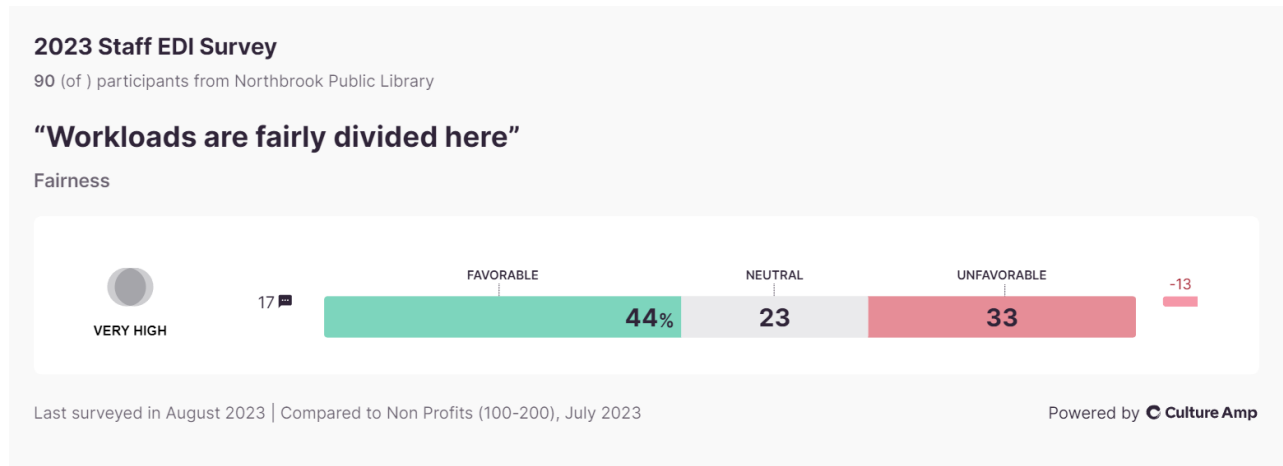


Figure 15. Score breakdown for “workloads are fairly divided here” (44% positive, 13 points below benchmark).

The low scores for workload fairness across all dimensions—whether department, tenure, administrative management status, in-person vs. hybrid, status, etc.—suggests that this is a structural issue across the library. The only organizational factor that impacts workload assignment is **department**, with Maker Services most likely to feel like their workloads are unfair. Interestingly, **income** is also a determining factor in the perception of a fair workload, with those earning less than \$20,000 dollars a year with the highest perception of fairness. This suggests that workloads are broadly perceived as unfair by paid, full-time staff across the entire library.

From qualitative data, we found that staff had several related interpretations for how workloads are assigned. These include the assertions that:

- While all managers and departments can be assigned heavy workloads, workloads, resourcing, and autonomy varies by managers’ and departments’ working relationships with administrative management
- While within-department workloads are relatively equitable, library-wide projects involving committees and administrative management participation are highly work intensive
- Where there is volunteer work not directly related to people’s roles, the same small group of people tends to volunteer for taking it on, often out of a belief that “if I don’t do it, no one will.”
- When volunteers have demonstrated that they can perform this work, they can be formally or informally assigned to do similar work in the future

Taken together, this suggests that while most managers are able to equitably divide work among their teams, not all managers are assigned the same quantity of work, are given the same resourcing/staffing available to complete, or are granted the decision-making autonomy to choose how the work happens. On top of this, when library-wide projects occur, a relatively small group of overworked staff tends to end up working on them—whether due to being selected, volunteering, or being peer pressured—resulting in highly inequitable distribution of work across the library.

7. What prevents the library's internal constituent groups from being representative and accountable to the community?

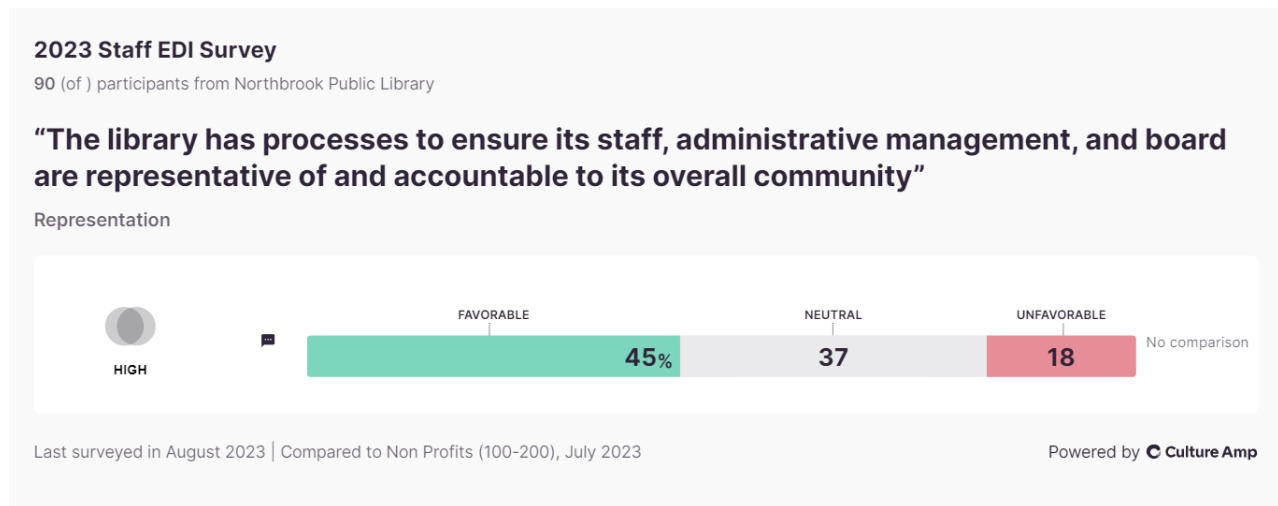


Figure 16. Score breakdown for “the library has processes to ensure its staff, administrative management, and board are representative of and accountable to its overall community” (45% positive).

While the library’s racial demographic numbers roughly reflect the local community (Northbrook’s racial demographics are roughly 79% White, 15% Asian, and 3% Latine/Hispanic, while the library staff population indicated by the survey is roughly 75% White, 10% Asian, and 6% Latine/Hispanic), and the library has many LGBTQ+ staff, a large proportion of staff recognize that the library is not yet representative and accountable to the community, and identify the importance of racial equity. This heightened awareness may be due to highly salient stories about negative interactions with NPL patrons who have made disparaging comments about historically underrepresented groups.

Where staff from marginalized groups identify issues is not only in the overall numbers of staff from marginalized communities, but also the relatively low access to decision-making that staff from these communities experience, the low representation of staff from marginalized communities in leadership positions, the perception that internal library systems (like promotion and hiring) are inequitable, and the concern across many staff that the administrative management and the board are not sufficiently acting with marginalized staff concerns in mind. Staff want not only to see people like them represented within the library, but have their needs met as a result of decisions made with their feedback and input.

8. How does race impact a staff member's experience at the NPL?

		Overall Northbrook Public L	White	East Asian, Sou...	Two or more ra...	Latine or Non-...	Not Specified
No. of responses	90	67	9	5	5		
Decision Making	39%	42	37	20	27		
Fairness	63%	67	47	36	80		
Voice	44%	46	44	7	40		
Community	62%	64	58	40	75		
Enablement	83%	83	81	80	93		
Belonging	68%	72	61	45	75		
Leadership	55%	57	58	32	56		
Engagement	72%	75	74	40	80		
Representation	47%	51	47	0	60		

Figure 17. Score breakdown for all survey factors by race.

Statistical analysis suggests that there are unlikely to be systemic differences in experiences for White, Asian, or Latine/Hispanic staff, given the similarity of scores across different factors. For mixed or multiracial staff, whose worse experiences were statistically significant, we found similar concerns to those that other staff shared around decision making, input and voice, and higher standards regarding what a safe and representative library might look like.

Even though there may not be systemic differences in staff experiences by race, we found that a consistent concern was the presence of racial acts of exclusion (also known as microaggressions) from other staff and patrons. On the staff side, the incidents staff reported tended to involve staff members minimizing the existence or impact of racism and the importance of EDI efforts. Several survey comments corroborated this, with some expressing that EDI was a waste of time and effort and others minimizing the need for this work. While only a small number of comments referred to these outlier incidents, their impact on staff experiences can be large. Many more comments noted that while challenges remain, the majority of NPL staff are making efforts to treat all staff fairly and equitably.

9. What are the unique needs of patron-facing staff?

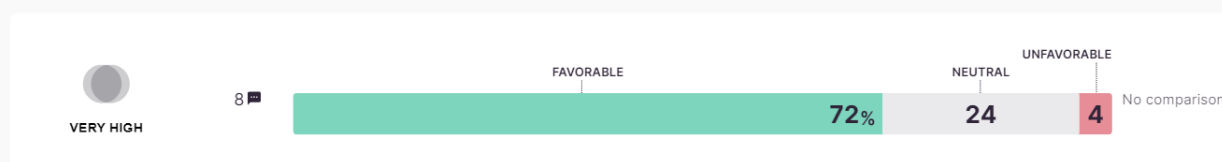
Patron-facing staff mentioned several instances where NPL patrons have made disparaging comments about marginalized groups or library events related to EDI. Notably, despite some qualitative comments mentioning that patron-facing staff feel actively unsupported, many other comments mention the opposite, and quantitative data reflects this: only 4% of survey respondents feel actively unsupported.

2023 Staff EDI Survey

90 (of) participants from Northbrook Public Library

"I feel supported in addressing and resolving conflict with patrons, when it occurs"

Community



Last surveyed in August 2023 | Compared to Non Profits (100-200), July 2023

Powered by **Culture Amp**

Figure 18. Score breakdown for the question, "I feel supported in addressing and resolving conflict with patrons, when it occurs" (72% positive, no benchmark).

Where patron-facing staff do mention consistent needs, they refer to wanting more formal support from administrative management—not in helping to resolve individual patron incidents, but in establishing things like a formal library-wide statement committing to EDI that can be referenced by staff, patron policies, and expectations for when to escalate their response to patron behavior.

10. To what extent is there a generational gap at the NPL, and if so, how does it manifest?

One assertion that came up several times in survey responses was that there is a gap in expectations and experiences related to age or generation. To understand whether this was the case, we analyzed survey scores by age and found that, excepting staff between 18-24 (many of whom are part-time workers), staff under 35 tend to have worse experiences, particularly related to **Voice, Belonging, Engagement, and Representation**.

Age		Overall Northbrook Public Library								Non Profits (100-200), July							
		35 - 44	25 - 34	55 - 64	45 - 54	18 - 24	65+			35 - 44	25 - 34	55 - 64	45 - 54	18 - 24	65+		
No. of responses		90	19	19	14	12	12	9	5	90	19	19	14	12	12	9	5
Decision Making	39%	40	30	43	56	28	52			57%	40	30	43	56	28	52	
Fairness	63%	65	52	63	73	68	70			62%	65	52	63	73	68	70	
Voice	44%	43	25	48	58	53	63			62%	43	25	48	58	53	63	
Community	62%	62	57	63	73	65	67			n/a	62	57	63	73	65	67	
Enablement	83%	86	75	83	81	97	93			81%	86	75	83	81	97	93	
Belonging	68%	76	55	61	73	77	83			79%	76	55	61	73	77	83	
Leadership	55%	59	47	56	67	48	71			71%	59	47	56	67	48	71	
Engagement	72%	79	54	76	86	75	81			70%	79	54	76	86	75	81	
Representation	47%	56	24	54	65	40	72			n/a	56	24	54	65	40	72	

Figure 19. Score breakdown for all survey factors, by age, comparing to overall library scores on left, and benchmark, on right.

This age cohort expects the library to take more effort to include staff opinions, seek and use staff feedback, recognize the contributions of individual staff members, and achieve EDI outcomes. They have lower tolerance for what other staff members may view as common issues within libraries, like slow decision-making, but also may be more willing to share feedback.

It is important to note that while other age cohorts may have more positive scores, for most survey factors these scores are still below benchmark. Our interpretation is not that other age cohorts are satisfied with the NPL, but rather that the 25-34 age cohort feels the most strongly toward issues that everyone shares.

Recommendations

This section sums up Zheng Consulting's recommendations based on our analysis of the Northbrook Public Library's scores on the 2023 Baseline EDI survey. While these recommendations may not entirely address every EDI challenge or inequity identified, we believe that these are actions that will have the most impact, and can be followed through on within a year to achieve measurable progress. In crafting these recommendations, we also incorporated the suggestions from The Blackberry Collection, and staff recommendations for taking action as shared through the survey.

Recommendation #1: The library should seek staff feedback on library-wide projects and pause the projects with the worst impact:effort ratio as soon as it is able to, for at least one year.

One of the most consistent points of feedback received is that staff are doing too much, and that staff across the library are struggling with overwork and burnout. Given the library's trend of taking on more and more "highly urgent, highly important" projects, the simplest way to reduce overwork and burnout is to reverse this trend.

Instead, the library should put in the effort to prioritize which of its projects are genuinely the most urgent and important, and recommit to a smaller set of projects that are less likely to overwhelm staff. To figure out these priorities, staff should be surveyed—and to ensure that staff time and effort in sharing their feedback is respected, administrative management must commit beforehand to relinquishing control over which projects the library will eventually decide on, and which it will pause.

We recommend asking staff to evaluate every existing (and proposed) project by its perceived impact and the perceived effort it will take to achieve. Projects can be ranked according to their effort-to-impact ratio, with the bottom half ranked projects paused for a year. This process can also be an opportunity for administrative management to pilot a different way of making decisions, in which staff have more feedback.

Recommendation #2: The library should formalize and communicate the decision-making roles and responsibilities of different library constituents.

Many members of staff have expressed confusion and frustration with the different roles and responsibilities that non-manager staff, managers, individual members of administrative management, administrative management more generally, and the board have in ensuring the operation and decision-making around the library. Staff concern is both that these responsibilities are not consistent, and also that some staff's de facto role and responsibility are not aligned with their intended role and responsibility.

HR should take the lead in formally documenting and communicating this information to staff, and working with all staff—including members of administrative management—to assess whether de facto decision-making processes or staff responsibilities align with expectations, and if they do not, work together with individual staff members to make their roles equitable. This recommendation should be the first step in a larger effort to implement more transparent and consistent HR processes across the library, to make the staff experience more consistent.

Recommendation #3: The library should invest in management, feedback, and communication upskilling for administrative management.

While not every critical comment was actionable, many comments referred directly to ways in which administrative management can do better at communicating transparently, pushing decision-making down where possible while making decisive top-down decisions where necessary, and giving and receiving potentially critical feedback. Our assessment confirmed that these are strong areas for growth for administrative management, and we recommend that administrative management seek out evidence-based management and communication training to improve their skills.

To ensure that this investment results in changed behavior, accountability for learning, and improvement, we recommend that specific questions be added to their existing performance evaluation, allowing others to assess their improvement, and that the board approves an incentive plan tying higher scores on the 2024 EDI survey to a 5% of base salary bonus, greater vacation time, or an equivalent incentive.

We make this recommendation in recognition that it is ultimately every staff member's responsibility to own their responsibilities within their role, and communicating, collaborating, and leading successfully is the responsibility of administrative management. Where additional resources are needed to upskill administrative management we recommend they be procured, but accountability lies with administrative management to demonstrate growth and success.

Recommendation #4: The library should reassess and redistribute EDI-related workstreams between the volunteer EDI committee, managers, and administrative management, with HR and managers taking a greater role in the process.

The more siloed and volunteer-driven EDI work, the greater the risk of burnout and the lower the likelihood of integration with an organization. If EDI is a priority for the NPL, we strongly recommend that key partners, including administrative management, the EDI committee, and all department managers, come together to reassess the EDI work to be done and redistribute it where needed to share the responsibility. For example, the EDI committee can take on EDI event programming, managers can take on integrating EDI into their departmental work, and administrative management can take on EDI-related library-wide policies, processes, and culture.

To support this, we recommend that the NPL also use this opportunity to rethink how EDI work is undertaken at the library. Our findings suggest that EDI committee members want the opportunity to give specific feedback on library-wide EDI projects (like an advisory board would), without the responsibility to undertake these projects on their own, and tend to have interest and capacity in volunteer activities like cultural events.

To enable this shift, a far greater portion of EDI work at the library should become led by administrative management and HR, with the EDI committee in an advisor role. HR can and should be the primary leader in building equitable and inclusive policies and processes, as well as identifying and administering learning and development to staff, and we also recommend ensuring that HR is resourced and supported to do so—potentially by hiring another HR specialist to assist.

Recommendation #5: The library should organize and engage in regular staff dialogues with peer institutions.

Finally, we recommend that the library organize recurring facilitated dialogues with other local library staff facing similar challenges, at least twice a year and ideally once a quarter. These facilitated dialogues can touch on topics including staff wellness, burnout prevention, EDI initiatives, and patron-related best practices, and be a valuable forum for staff to build community, share and gain perspectives on EDI and related work, and develop in their roles.

We make this recommendation to help staff feel a greater sense of connection with their roles and their profession, to support staff mental health and resilience navigating through the sociopolitical tension of the moment, and as a learning and development opportunity. We recommend at least the first few dialogues (if not all of them) consider bringing together administrative management from both libraries for their own conversation separate from the conversation non-administrative management staff have, then the staff from each respective library reconvening to share learning afterwards.

Conclusion

The vast majority of staff—83%—identify the Northbrook Public Library as a great place to work. The library is highly effective at supporting staff to do their jobs, has competent department managers that ensure high performance, and offers more opportunities than peer institutions. Its EDI challenges and areas to grow are primarily in its decision making, communication, and workload division. Quantitative and qualitative data support the conclusion that the library's existing processes can be opaque, passive, reactive, and inequitable, resulting in a strong divide between administrative management and staff.

Successful progress for the library will require a careful balance between recognizing staff excitement for EDI work and ensuring that the work itself respects the limited capacity available at present. We believe that our recommendations, if followed through, strike that balance and will create meaningful impact within a year's time. The goal is not only to reduce some of the inequities we identified, but also make the overall library experience more positive for all staff. We hope this report has helped highlight some of the complex strengths and weaknesses for the library at present, and illuminated a path forward to make tangible progress.

Zheng Consulting

Lily Zheng
Alexis Victor

Appendix

On Data and Statistical Significance

Almost all quantitative data contains variation. On average, women's scores may be different from men's scores, for example. To identify whether this variation is *meaningful*, and likely the result of a systemic difference in experiences (rather than random chance or isolated individual experiences), Zheng Consulting conducts statistical analyses on disaggregated survey scores. We use a common standard in quantitative research called a *p-value*, which is a number between 0 and 1. If the p-value from our analyses is *.05 or lower*, we can conclude that the difference isn't a coincidence and that there is a strong possibility for a disparity. If the p-value is *between .05 and .10*, we conclude that there is a weak possibility for a disparity. If the p-value is *higher than .10*, we cannot confidently conclude that there is a disparity.

Our preliminary analysis aimed to identify statistically significant variation on the basis of demographic traits (gender, race, LGBTQ+ status, disability, caretaker status, religion, income), and organizational traits (department, tenure, manager/non-manager/admin management, and hybrid vs. remote). We found the following:

- There is not likely to be a library-wide gender disparity. (p-value > .10)
- There is not likely to be a library-wide disability disparity. (p-value > .10)
- There is not likely to be a library-wide caretaker status disparity. (p-value > .10)
- There is not likely to be a library-wide class (income) disparity. (p-value > .10)
- There is not likely to be a library-wide age/generational disparity. (p-value > .10)
- There is not likely to be a library-wide tenure disparity. (p-value > .10)
- There is not likely to be a library-wide hybrid vs. remote disparity. (p-value > .10)

There is strong evidence for a library-wide departmental disparity negatively affecting Maker Services (p-value <.05), and weak evidence for a library-wide departmental disparity positively affecting Administration and Events Production. (p-value < .10)

There is strong evidence for a library-wide leadership role disparity positively affecting administrative management, compared to managers and non-manager staff. (p-value <.05)

There is strong evidence for a library-wide racial disparity negatively affecting members of two or more races. (p-value < .05)

There is inconclusive evidence for a library-wide LGBTQ+ disparity negatively affecting members of the LGBTQ+ community. (p-value ~.10)

On Benchmarks

The CultureAmp platform includes hundreds of built-in benchmarks. While no library-specific benchmark exists, Zheng Consulting considered three benchmarks (Information Services, July 2023, Non Profits (100-200), July 2023, and Government North America 2022). All benchmarks had similar scores, and ZC chose the benchmark that seemed to offer the most useful comparisons for the NPL.

BOARD FEEDBACK RESULTS FROM STAFF

Month/Year: 9/2023

Questions for Board of Trustees

- What made you want to join the library board? Do you think those motivations still drive your actions and decision-making? Why or why not?
- Can you describe what ways the library board has tried to build trust and/or connection with staff to this point?
- How do you balance the needs and desires of the community with staff's well-being when making decisions for the library? Do you prioritize one group over the other?
- How does the library board intend to promote and support the library's ongoing EDI work?

Feedback for Board of Trustees

- Staff wanted to express their appreciation for the support and trust the board has in staff. In the current political climate where some library boards are unsupportive and, sometimes, antagonistic to library staff, we are fortunate to have a board that trusts staff to do our work and also shows up for and represents the community in a thoughtful way.
- Staff recognize that the board had a different experience than staff did with The Blackberry Collection, and ultimately it was the board's decision whether or not we continue to work with TBC, however, the way the situation was handled made staff feel that their contributions and feedback during the TBC assessment were not valued or even acknowledged by the library board, leading to some of the distrust that staff is feeling.
- Staff would like to the library board to remember that we are individuals, not an amorphous group. The hierarchical structure of the library means that all the information that is passed between the library board and staff is funneled through the Executive Director. Without building rapport with staff as individuals, some of the context behind that information might be lost in that exchange. The hierarchy also means that there will always be some level of

distrust because of the amount of power the board holds. Building a rapport with staff and being open to feedback and potential criticism would go a long way to building trust.