SPEC Kit 315

Leave and Professional Development Benefits

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SURVEY RESULTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This survey investigates two broad categories of benefit plans currently offered to professional library staff at ARL member libraries: leave time and support for professional development activities. Topics include benefits eligibility; holiday and intersession leave; plan designs and accrual rates for paid time off (PTO), vacation, and sick leave; and professional development leaves such as dedicated research time and sabbaticals. Other professional development topics include financial support and relief from duties for conference attendance; funding for professional association memberships; and financial and other support for college credit course work, internships, and certifications.

The survey addresses leave benefits and professional development support in one survey primarily because these benefits overlap and intermingle. For example, depending on the institution, time spent at annual conferences may be treated as vacation or some other leave, or as part of a research time plan. Because the benefits overlap it would be difficult to assess leave plans or professional development support practices without the comprehensive view afforded by data from both categories.

While it is likely that the benefits within the scope of this survey are offered to library employees beyond librarians, they are most commonly afforded to librarians. Since the variance in the extent to which these benefits are offered to other categories of employees might make the responses to the survey more difficult to interpret, the focus of the survey is on librarians, though respondents could consider other staff who are eligible for the same benefits in developing their responses.

The survey was distributed to the 123 ARL member libraries in June 2009. Seventy-three libraries completed the survey by the deadline of August 4 for a 59% response rate.

Full-time Status and Benefits Eligibility

The survey began by asking how many hours per week a librarian must work to be considered full-time and how many to qualify for leave benefits. The most common requirement for full-time status is 40 hours of work per week (63 % of respondents). Seventy-seven percent require that librarians work 37.5 or more hours per week and 90% at least 35 hours per week to be considered a full-time employee. Only seven respondents give full-time status to those who work fewer than 35 hours per week.

In all but six cases librarians must work at least half of the full-time requirement to be eligible for benefits. The most common requirement for benefits eligibility is 20 hours of work per week (34 respondents or 54%). Twenty-two percent require service of 30 or more hours per week and 10 percent of those require 40 hours per week for benefits eligibility.

Hours per Week	Range	Mean	Median
To be considered full-time	26 – 40	37.9	40
To qualify for leave benefits	1 – 40	22.6	20

Holiday and Intersession Leave

The survey next asked how many days of holiday leave are awarded each year and whether there is paid leave

for intersession breaks. All but one of the 67 responding institutions reported offering designated holiday leave. The most common response was ten days of holiday leave per year (20 responses or 30%). Seventeen respondents (25%) award seven to nine holidays. The other 29 respondents (43%) award from 11 to a maximum of 19 holidays per year.

Intersession leave is much less common. Fifty-five of the responding institutions (76%) offer no designated intersession leave. Fifteen of the 17 institutions that do have intersession leave offer one to seven days in addition to holidays. The other two institutions (who did not report holiday leave) offer 4 or 12 intersession days. These extra days fall predominantly during the winter closure periods (Christmas to New Years day) and not typically between other semesters.

Number of Days	Range	Mean	Median
Holidays	0 – 19	10.7	10
Intersession Leave	0 – 12	1.0	0
Combined Holiday and Intersession Leave	7 – 19	11.7	12

Leave Accrual

The survey asked whether the library had a Paid Time Off (PTO) leave plan (that combines vacation, sick, and personal leave into a single bank of days for employee paid time off) or a leave plan with separate vacation and/or personal leave and sick leave. It also asked whether there is one accrual rate for leave or multiple rates.

Paid Time Off (PTO)

Only two respondents (3%) reported having a Paid Time Off (PTO) leave plan. One of these has one accrual rate and the other has two. At the first institution librarians are awarded 168 hours a year of combined leave time. At the second institution librarians are awarded 21 days of leave in their first year of employment and one additional day each year of employment up to a maximum of 26 days.

Vacation and Sick Leave

The other 65 respondents (97%) reported having separate leave plans for vacation and/or personal leave and sick leave. For vacation leave, 48 respondents have one accrual rate (74%) and 17 have multiple rates (26%). For sick leave, 57 respondents have one accrual rate (89%) and seven have multiple rates (11%).

One Accrual Rate

At the institutions with one accrual rate the number of vacation/personal leave hours accrued annually ranges from 96 to 232 with a mean of 180.87 and a median of 179. The most frequent responses were 192 hours (14 responses or 29%) and 176 hours (12 responses or 25%).

The number of sick leave hours accrued ranges from 54 to 1056 with a mean of 189.44. The median, 96 hours, was also the most frequent response (23 or 40%).

Number of Days	Range	Mean	Median
Vacation and/or Personal Leave	96 – 232	108.87	179
Sick Leave	54 – 1056	189.44	96

Multiple Accrual Rates

At the institutions with multiple accrual rates the number of rates for vacation/personal leave ranges from 2 to 9; two or three rates are the most common. For all but one respondent the criteria for each level are years of employment. The other institution has different rates for those with administrative and non-administrative assignments. There is a great deal of difference between the number of years of service required for each level and the number of hours accrued at each level. The table on page 24 provides the detailed responses.

The number of rates for sick leave is smaller, ranging from two to five. As with vacation leave, the criteria for each level are mostly years of employment. The table on page 25 provides the detailed responses.

Number of Ranges	Range	Mean	Median
Vacation and/or Personal Leave	2 – 9	4.4	3
Sick Leave	2 – 5	3.6	4

Leave Balances and Cash out

The survey asked how much leave could be accrued and carried forward, how much could be cashed out at termination of employment, and what were the eligibility requirements for cash out. All but six of the responding institutions (91%) allow some cash out of accrued vacation/personal leave, but only 17 (28%) permit cash outs of some amount of sick leave. The maximum balances, maximum cash out, and eligibility for cash out of vacation/personal leave varied widely among respondents as seen in the table on page 26. For sick leave, most respondents have no cap on the maximum balance that can accrue, though the amount of cash out and eligibility criteria vary considerably. Interestingly, the respondent's comments indicate that some portion of institutions permit librarians to apply sick leave balance towards qualifying service for retirement benefits.

Sabbatical and Professional Development Leave

At the majority of responding institutions (52 or 73%) librarians do not receive scheduled or dedicated research time as part of their regular assignment. At the 19 institutions that give such leave there is significant variance in the amount of full time equivalency (FTE) that is scheduled or dedicated to research, but the most commonly reported amount is 10 percent of FTE.

On the other hand, 62 institutions (87%) reported that librarians may apply for sabbaticals or professional development leaves. Respondents described a wide variety of leave durations. The majority (56%) use months as the basis of their leave duration; others are semester based. The most common durations for sabbaticals or professional development leaves are depicted in the following table.

Leave Duration	Responses
6 months or 12 months	12
1 year	9
1 semester or 2 semesters	6
6 months	4

The majority of respondents (53 or 77%) indicated that librarians on sabbatical or professional development leave continue to receive some level of salary; 45% pay the full salary. Respondent's comments convey that a wide variety of compensation designs are employed for sabbatical leaves. The most common feature is multiple levels of compensation based on percentages of the librarian's annual salary and with longer leave duration coupled with a lower percentage of salary. The most typical examples are 1 semester or 6 months at full pay, with a reduction to half salary for leaves with a duration of 12 months.

Other designs include leave with varying percentages of compensation based upon the librarian's length of service. In one example, after four years of service a librarian could take a 12 month leave at 60% of annual salary or 6 months at 75% or 8 months at 75%. After six years of service, a librarian could take a 12 month leave at 80% of salary or 6 months leave at 90%.

Leave for Conference Attendance

Only 10% of respondents (7 of 70) reported that librarians are required to use personal, vacation, or other leave to attend professional conferences that are primarily for their own personal professional development. (For the purposes of this survey, "personal professional development travel" does not include travel where the employee is conducting business on behalf of the library.) The respondents' comments indicate that a significant portion of this leave is from plans designated for professional development and not vacation or personal leave plans. Accordingly, institutional support for librarian attendance is considerable.

Financial Support for Conference Registration and Travel

Ninety-two percent of the responding institutions report some financial support for conference registration and/or travel and accommodations for conferences that librarians attend primarily for their own personal professional development. While only eight (11%) pay full registration and full travel expenses, half of the respondents pay at least part of the registration and travel costs. Only six respondents (8%) offer no financial support.

The respondents' comments show a wide variety of methods for establishing the amount of funding.

Many report that decisions are made by a staff committee. The allocation of a set annual allowance per librarian to be used for conferences or other professional development opportunities is prevalent; reported amounts range from $300 to $2,000. A variation on this method is the allocation of a set amount for librarians with more than one funding level based on tenure, permanent status, or rank. For example, one library provides $1000 per year for non-permanent (non-tenured) librarians and $800 per year for other librarians. Another method is to pay a set percentage of conference expenses. Percentages reported include 80 and 90 percent. The comments also indicate that the level of participation by the librarian at the conference is a common determinant of the amount of funding.

Personal Memberships for Professional Associations

Only 7% of respondents reported that their library pays or reimburses librarians for personal memberships to professional associations such as the American Library Association. Of those five, the comments indicate that librarians receive professional development allowances under a formal plan and may use those funds for a variety of purposes including personal memberships to relevant professional associations. Among those who don't pay, a number reported that payment or reimbursement for personal memberships to professional associations was prohibited by a state regulation or institutional policy.

Financial Support for College Credit Courses

The survey asked whether the library covered any expenses for college credit courses that are either job related or for personal development. The majority of respondents provide no financial support either for registration or books, materials, and equipment regardless of whether the course is job related or for personal development. Fifty-one percent of the respondents provide no financial support for registration expenses for either job-related or personal development credit courses. Seventy-one percent provide no support for books, materials, and equipment.

Just under half provide at least partial support for registration for job-related courses, but fewer than a third do so for personal development classes. Only 15 provide any support for books, materials, and equipment for job-related courses and only four of these cover books for personal development courses.

[The authors note that the amount of financial support for both categories of coursework may not include institution support beyond the libraries (at the university level, for example) and suspect there is more financial support in many instances than reported here.]

Thirteen institutions (23%) require job-related courses to be taken at the home institution; 12 (26%) require personal development courses to be taken at the home institution. Ten of these institutions cover expenses for these courses.

In the majority of cases (42 responses or 62%) time spent to attend job-related courses is treated as time worked, though a significant number of respondents indicated that the employee uses vacation/personal time or makes up the time. Only nine of the responding institutions (14%) treat time spent to attend personal development courses as time worked. In the majority of cases the employee uses vacation/personal time or makes up the time spent on these courses.

The maximum number of credit hours that librarians may take per session for courses that are either job related or for the librarian's own personal development is quite similar. In either case the minimum number reported is three and the maximum is "no limit." For those respondents who specified a number, the mean is about 6.5 and the median is 6.

[See the tables on page 15 for a detailed comparison of institutional support for job-related and personal development college credit courses.]

Financial Support for Internships

The survey also asked whether the library covered any expenses for internships that are either job related or for personal development. As with courses, the majority of respondents (39 or 60% for job-related internships; 56 or 89% for personal development) provide no financial support either for registration or books, materials, and equipment, or for travel regardless of whether the internship is job related or for personal development. Only 17 respondents (26%) cover any costs for job-related internships and only five of these cover costs for personal development internships.

[The authors note again that the amount of financial support for both categories of internships may not include institution support beyond the libraries and suspect there is more financial support in many instances than reported here.]

Only three institutions require that internships be taken at the home institution and all three of these cover at least some of the costs of the internship.

Sixteen respondents (41%) report that time spent on job-related internships is treated as time worked and only two (5%) treat time spent on personal development internships in this manner. There is some flexibility in work scheduling for internships that are either job-related or for personal development and the employee is either allowed to make up the time or use vacation/personal leave.

In most cases, internships may be six to eight credit hours per session, though a few respondents report there is no limit.

[See the tables on page 16 for a detailed comparison of institutional support for job-related and personal development internships.]

Comparison of Courses and Internships

A comparison of how the responding institutions treat the librarian's time away from his or her normal duties in order to attend job-related college credit courses versus to complete a job-related internship shows course time is more likely to be counted as work time and employees are more likely to have to use vacation/personal leave for internships. Eight institutions don't allow librarians to participate in job-related internships during normal assignment hours versus three that don't allow attendance at job-related courses.

A comparison of how the responding institutions treat the librarian's time away from his or her normal duties in order to attend college credit courses for personal development versus to complete internships shows that most either require the librarian to use vacation/personal leave or to make up the time away. A slightly larger number of institutions don't allow participation in either personal development courses (12) or internships (11) during normal assignment hours.

[See the tables on page 17 for a detailed comparison of the institutional treatment of time away from normal duties for credit courses and internships.]

Professional Certification Exams

The majority of responding libraries do not cover expenses for professional certification exams. Sixteen (24%) libraries do provide financial support, but only for job-related certifications. In most cases, the librarian's time away from his or her normal duties in order to prepare for or take professional certification exams is treated the same as personal development courses and internships; the librarian is required to use vacation/personal leave or to make up the time away.

Other Leave or Professional Development Benefits

Thirty-nine respondents (57%) reported that their institutions offer leave and professional development benefits beyond those described above. For example, a number mentioned that librarians are eligible for personal unpaid leave, flexible scheduling, and telework. Others receive tuition reimbursement for noncredit courses or travel support for job-related committee work.

Conclusion

The survey results indicated there is considerable variation in the leave programs at ARL member libraries. Relatively few use a Paid Time Off leave program or offer intersession leave. While there is a wide variation in leave balance and cash out policies, the total paid time off for librarians is considerable.

There is also considerable support for research and professional development activities, though programs for supporting professional development show wide variation in design and procedures. While relatively few libraries provide a regularly scheduled percentage of assignment time off, most offer some options for time away for research and professional development activities. Ninety percent forgive time away for conferences. Eighty-five percent offer some financial support for conferences, though there is little support for professional association memberships. There is mixed financial support for college credit and internships and little for certification, and there are a variety of methods used to determine funding. Nonetheless, there is significant support in allowance for flexible scheduling.

From this survey of typical leave program components (such as accrual rates, intersession leave, and cash out policies) and research and professional development program components (such as support for travel to conferences and participation in college credit courses), it is clear that ARL member libraries are able to offer a wide variety of leave and professional benefit options to their librarians. While leave benefits often are mandated by the parent institution, many times portions of research and professional development benefits are left to the discretion of library administration. This allows a certain flexibility for administrators to support a wide variety of training opportunities for their professional staff.

The depth and breadth of comments provided by the survey respondents, particularly in the areas of sabbaticals and "other" benefits, was remarkable. The authors strongly encourage readers of this SPEC Kit to carefully review the comments as they complement the statistics and together provide a much richer picture of the varied benefit options available to librarians. Finally, a thorough reading of the representative documents section is recommended, as the authors were deliberate in their selection of leave and professional development policies and procedures that represented a wide variety of practices and innovative designs.

Comparison of Job-related and Personal Development College Credit Courses

Expenses Covered

	Job Related N=72		Personal Development N=72	
	Responses	%	Responses	%
Full Registration	2	3%	2	3%
Full Registration, Full Books, etc.	6	8%	1	1%
Full Registration, Part Books, etc.	2	3%	—	—
Full Registration, No Books, etc.	6	8%	6	8%
Part Registration	3	4%	—	—
Part Registration, Part Books, etc.	6	8%	3	4%
Part Registration, No Books, etc.	10	14%	9	13%
No Registration	1	1%	—	—
No Registration, Full Books, etc.	1	1%	—	—
No Registration, No Books, etc.	35	49%	51	71%

Treatment of Time Away from Normal Duties

	Job Related N=68		Personal Development N=63	
	Responses	%	Responses	%
Counted as time worked	42	62%	9	14%
Employee uses personal time, e.g., vacation	24	35%	37	59%
Employee is allowed to make up the time	32	47%	37	59%
Not allowed during normal assignment hours	3	4%	12	19%
Other response	3	4%	1	2%

Maximum Number of Credit Hours Allowed per Session

	Job Related N=21			Personal Development N=19		
	Range	Mean	Median	Range	Mean	Median
Number of credit hours	3 – 16	6.7	6	3 – 16	6.3	6

Comparison of Job-related and Personal Development Internships

Expenses Covered

	Job Related N=65		Personal Development N=63	
	Responses	%	Responses	%
Full Registration, Full Travel	1	2%	—	—
Full Registration, Full Books, etc., Full Travel	5	8%	—	—
Full Registration, Part Books, etc., Part Travel	1	2%	—	—
Full Registration, No Books, etc., Full Travel	1	2%	—	—
Full Registration, No Books, etc., No Travel	1	2%	1	2%
Part Registration, Part Books, etc., Part Travel	5	8%	—	—
Part Registration, Part Books, etc., No Travel	—	—	1	2%
Part Registration, No Books, etc., Part Travel	1	2%	1	2%
Part Registration, No Books, etc., No Travel	2	3%	2	3%
No Registration, No Books, etc., No Travel	39	60%	56	89%
Other Response	9	14%	2	3%

Treatment of Time Away from Normal Duties

	Job Related N=39		Personal Development N=37	
	Responses	%	Responses	%
Counted as time worked	16	41%	2	5%
Employee uses personal time, e.g., vacation	17	44%	24	65%
Employee is allowed to make up the time	14	36%	21	54%
Not allowed during normal assignment hours	8	21%	11	30%
Other response	2	5%	—	—

Maximum Number of Credit Hours Allowed per Session

	Job Related N=7			Personal Development N=6		
	Range	Mean	Median	Range	Mean	Median
Number of credit hours	6 – 8	6.6	6	6 – 8	6.8	6.5

Comparison of Treatment of Time Away from Normal Duties for College Credit Courses and Internships

Job Related

	Courses N=68		Internships N=39	
	Responses	%	Responses	%
Counted as time worked	42	62%	16	41%
Employee uses personal time, e.g., vacation	24	35%	17	44%
Employee is allowed to make up the time	32	47%	14	36%
Not allowed during normal assignment hours	3	4%	8	21%
Other response	3	4%	2	5%

Personal Development

	Courses N=63		Internships N=37	
	Responses	%	Responses	%
Counted as time worked	9	14%	2	5%
Employee uses personal time, e.g., vacation	37	59%	24	65%
Employee is allowed to make up the time	37	59%	21	54%
Not allowed during normal assignment hours	12	19%	11	30%
Other response	1	2%	—	—