

2018-04-30

Social workers within Canadian public libraries: A multicase study

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Schweizer, E. (2018). Social workers within Canadian public libraries: A multicase study (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada). Retrieved from <https://prism.ucalgary.ca>. doi:10.11575/PRISM/31913
<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/106632>

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Social workers within Canadian public libraries: A multicase study

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WORK

CALGARY, ALBERTA

APRIL, 2018

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the emerging field of social work practice within Canadian public libraries. This is an interdisciplinary area of practice that has been increasing in prevalence across North America over the last decade. Despite the burgeoning movement that has begun to gain attention within public library circles and the popular media, comparatively little research has been published on library social work practice. There is a particular dearth of research in the area from Canadian social work perspectives. A mixed methods multicase study was utilized, consisting of a preliminary online survey distributed across Canada followed by analysis of four cases in which there are library-based social workers: Thunder Bay Public Library (TBPL), Kitchener Public Library (KPL), Mississauga Public Library (MPL), and Edmonton Public Library (EPL). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 participants, along with document review. Analysis was first performed for each individual case, followed by cross-case analysis. Four library social work models used by the urban public libraries were identified: social service agency partnership, local university partnership, municipal partnership, and full-time social work staff. In addition to the models, the major themes identified are grouped into two categories: public library motivations for including social workers within their operations, and the nature of social work practice in these settings. Primary findings indicate that library social work is an emerging distinct area of interdisciplinary practice that shows promise at individual and systems levels in helping to address social exclusion and improve community-based responses to broader social challenges such as homelessness, housing instability, poverty, mental health concerns, and substance misuse. Implications for social work and public library research and practice are provided.

PREFACE

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, E. Schweizer. The survey, interviews, and document analysis reported in Chapters 4-5 were covered by Ethics Certificate number REB 17-0439, issued by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for the project “An exploratory study on the motivation for Canadian public libraries to employ social workers and the nature of social work practice within these library systems” on May 14, 2017.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This piece of research would not have been possible without the participation and enthusiastic support of many.

My supervisor, Dr. Jessica Ayala – you pushed me to do better and helped me to see and explore the possible paths I could take with this research. Thank you for your excellence, guidance, and constant support.

My friend and fellow thesis traveller, Devin Allen – you made this a lot more fun than it should have been at times. At others, you kept me believing it was both possible and worth it.

My wife, Shereen Samuels – whose unwavering love and enthusiasm are the reasons I not only started my research, but finished it. You and I know the countless hours spent hashing out ideas in our living room. Looking back, it really was wonderful. And my amazing daughter, Rica Schweizer-Samuels - you show me every day what it's like to persevere and have dedication to goals. You make me want to do my best, every day. My family, my full focus is back on you now! Thank you for so wholeheartedly accompanying me on this long road and believing in me.

To all of the passionate study participants – your incredible work and generous sharing are what make this worth researching. I hope that this study will contribute to the greater efforts of all those who are striving to make our communities more inclusive and equitable - full of warmth, connection, and caring.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Described as the heart of our communities providing valuable resources that ameliorate the quality of life for Canadians (OCLC, 2014), libraries can be seen as democratizing agents (Wilson, 2008) that help bind people in their cities and towns (Griffins & Johnson, 2014). At the front line as institutions open to all, public libraries are the living rooms of the community (Pateman, 2014).

Canadian public libraries report increasing numbers of library users with complex needs and multiple barriers accessing their branches, along with the subsequent increasing demand for their connection to social services (Clevette & Halberstadt, 2015). As a result, these community institutions have a unique opportunity to help address the social needs of residents. In this period of heightened demand on library services and accompanying funding challenges (Canadian Urban Library Research Council, 2011), innovative and research-based decision-making is required to meet the needs of diverse library users and communities.

Social work is well positioned to make meaningful, much-needed contributions within these public library contexts. This has included the emerging practice of library-based social workers, a trend that started at the San Francisco Public Library in 2009 and has been steadily growing in popularity across the United States and Canada. Despite the paucity of peer-reviewed empirical research, the literature is beginning to demonstrate that library-based social workers may offer a valuable approach to effectively meet the needs of library users with complex needs or who are experiencing adversity (Kelley, Riggelman, Clara, & Navarro, 2017). In response, public libraries across Canada have been expanding their vision, scope, and cross-disciplinary collaborations with social workers to find new ways of offering programs, services, and partnerships in order to best serve their communities.

1.2 Purpose and significance

This exploratory mixed methods multicase study sought to provide insight into the emerging trend within Canadian public libraries to incorporate library social work, and to present recommendations for practice and further research (Patton, 2015). In this study, the problem under consideration was how public libraries as organizations are utilizing the skills of social workers to meet the varied, complex needs of library users within their communities. By exploring what has motivated Canadian public libraries to integrate social workers and the nature of social work practice within these libraries, this study aims to paint a picture of the current context in which library social workers are operating within Canadian communities – the reasons why public libraries have sought out the particular skills and knowledge of social workers, and the resulting characteristics of the emerging area of library-based social work practice.

Thus far, the impetus and invitation for this cross-disciplinary work has primarily stemmed from public libraries. Moreover, the trend of library-based social work is not yet being tracked or studied in a comprehensive way by social work or library associations in Canada or the United States. This means that there is currently a scarcity of research in the area despite the growing interest and development of the practice (Blank, 2014; Kelley et al., 2017). There is a particular gap within the social work literature on this topic (Kelley et al., 2017), and the literature review for this study was not able to unearth a single peer-reviewed Canadian study related to library social workers, although there has been gaining momentum and focus in the area within the grey literature. The research, policy, and practice on this emerging realm is a critical gap in the social work literature – a cross-disciplinary connection that is demonstrably important to libraries is not yet being adequately addressed within the social work field, especially within Canadian environments.

This study aimed to fill that gap by providing current case study research on Canadian public libraries that are at the forefront of this emerging practice and the implications for social work practice in this nascent area. By providing a snapshot of the Canadian context and sharing the experiences and perspectives of social workers, librarians, and municipal staff engaged in this collaborative work, this study suggests opportunities for future community-based social work practice and research involving collaboration between the disciplines of social work and library sciences situated within broader municipal contexts.

1.3 Motivations to pursue research

From the time I was very young, public libraries have been foundational to my routines and sense of well-being. As a child, we would make weekly visits to our local small-town library. As I became a teen, it was where I spent my summers – first participating in the summer camps hosted by the library and then volunteering as a counsellor. Throughout all of the stages of my life – young to middle age; single to wife to mother – the library has been where central to how I sought answers and community I needed.

As an adult it also became a place where I found not only entertainment, inspiration, and refuge, but also employment. One of the best jobs I have ever had was working as a reference assistant at the downtown Calgary Public Library. The variety of people with whom I would interact, the cross-section of people at all ages and phases of life, and my own alignment with the importance of public libraries influenced my motivation to do this research. Through these personal, volunteer, academic, and work experiences, when I happened to read a news article on the outreach workers at Edmonton Public Library in the first month of my Master of Social Work program, my thesis idea was born.

There is a story that illustrates the heart of what I value about the library's purpose, role, and influence in broader society, especially when it comes to the principles of social justice and inclusion that are foundational to my social work philosophy and practice. I am very motivated by an example of the how a minor policy change within American public libraries set the course for a larger, significant victory within the LGBTQ movement. In the early 1970's, the Task Force on Gay Liberation of the American Library Association (ALA) chose to focus on a single goal: advocating to reclassify Library of Congress books on gay liberation from "Abnormal Sexual Relations" to a new category of their creation: "Homosexuality, Lesbianism – Gay Liberation Movement, Homophile Movement" - in 1972, they succeeded (Duhigg, 2014).

This mezzo-level policy change had a major impact on the larger movement, which had been struggling to make any significant strides up to that point. Now with a clear victory to cite, however small it seemed, subsequent fundraising efforts centred around how to capitalize on this win to influence more mezzo and macro policy changes. Next, the American Psychiatric Association followed suit to change the definition of homosexuality so that it was not deemed a mental illness. This policy-based reframing of identity formed the foundation of greater macro policy wins across North America in which anti-discrimination laws were later put in place (Duhigg, 2014).

Spearheaded by Barbara Gittings (Adler, 2013), the ALA task force's success is even more noteworthy because Gittings wasn't a librarian – in fact, the ALA had made a practice of inviting general community members to participate in its conferences and committees to embed outside energy, talent, and perspectives in their work (Gittings, 1998). This one example illustrates how public libraries have a tradition of valuing and leading the way on interdisciplinary collaborations, especially at the foreground of social change. I strongly believe

that the public library is a natural place for social work to happen – there is so much shared between the disciplines when it comes to social justice, inclusion, community, equity, accessibility, and well-being of citizens – especially those who are marginalized - across the lifespan.

1.4 Intersectionality and interdisciplinary approaches

My experience working as a reference assistant at the downtown Calgary Public Library and my love of creative collaborative community-based solutions that come from interdisciplinary work also played an important role in the development of my passion for this developing area. I look to the intersections for possibility and transformative interactions. This is why I decided to do graduate work in a different discipline beyond my first career of teaching, and why I was drawn to do my thesis research at yet another crossroads. Whether we are embarking in community development, forming partnership, doing outreach, or any other social justice work, intersectional ways of thinking help with the framing – “conceiving of categories not as distinct but as always permeated by other categories, fluid and changing, always in the process of being created by dynamics of power ” (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013, p. 795).

Defying easy categorization, “interdisciplinary, intersectional, and interlocking are the kind of adjectives that best describe the way we feminists think” (Tong, 2009, p. 1). Intersectionality is an embedded part of my personal and professional approaches. A feminist sociological theorist, Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in the late 1980s; in addition to being a feminist theory, intersectionality is a research methodology and a foundation for social justice action (Symington, 2004). Intersectionality and global feminism call attention to transnational and colonial aspects of first-world white feminism and advocate that for all people to resist domination, groups must work together to dismantle oppressive systems across the world (Sumi et al., 2013, p. 804). The

concept of intersectionality involves continual linking and bridging of perspectives, types of knowledge, and even ways of being.

As a result, intersectionality has influenced approaches that guided this research project. As Midgley (2011) posited, “seeing through multiple theoretical lenses grants action research greater flexibility than adherence to a single theoretical perspective. When multiple theories are used as a resource for the comparison of different ways of seeing the phenomenon of concern, critique is enhanced” (p. 2). In the case of this research, the intersectional, interdisciplinary work I am exploring involves not only social workers and librarians, but also many other municipal and regional players such as community agencies, police, and health care professionals. The interdisciplinary nature of the work necessitates a pluralist stance that can bridge not only the multiplicity of community needs, the collaboration of disciplines in working toward social change, and meeting the needs of residents, but also within the type of social work practiced within the libraries that often requires a range and blend of clinical and community skills.

This intersectional, interdisciplinary personal orientation has influenced my research process in several ways. First, it is the reason I conceived of and committed to pursuing the inquiry itself. Next, it influenced my desire to begin with an online survey to capture diverse perspectives and experiences from a range of library staff across Canada. Similarly, rather than focusing on one case, I chose to embark upon a multi-site study which would allow for a greater variety of viewpoints and realities to emerge. Throughout the analysis, I made use of an iterative process which, while beginning with individual case analysis, eventually expanded to consider the interplay among the various places, players, motivations, and types of social work practice.

1.5 Study foundations and researcher worldviews

This research has a foundation of pragmatism (Dewey, Boydston & Hickman, 1996) in which there is a focus on applications, on what solutions could work for certain issues (Creswell, 2014). This worldview is aligned with my pluralistic, interdisciplinary, boundary-crossing personal and professional characteristics and experiences. There is a key acknowledgement of the importance of context (social, historical, political) for research, and pragmatists may utilize “a theoretical lens that is reflective of social justice and political aims” (p. 11). Public libraries are found across diverse communities, geographic locations, serving a multiplicity of people’s needs and interests. This study explores how library and municipal staff are working with social workers to creatively meet challenges and provide the best possible services to diverse groups with the public resources available, often through community development approaches.

Connected to the notion of multiple viewpoints and perspectives, I approached this research from an interpretive or social constructivist (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) position. The interpretive approach is one that “involves understanding meanings/contexts and processes as perceived from different perspectives, trying to understand individual and shared social meanings” (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014, p. 1). Similarly, the social constructivist approach is common within contemporary qualitative research in which researchers generally hold the belief that knowledge is constructed as opposed to discovered, and that the world we know is a mainly a human construction created collectively in social environments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995). Interpretivist formats for report writing are generally in the first person active voice, acknowledging the researcher’s position, participation, and influence within the research (Adje van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011). As a result, where possible throughout this thesis I have chosen to use first person.

1.6 Reflexivity

Increasingly encouraged within social work qualitative research is for authors to articulate our own cultural, social, class, gender, sexual orientation, and political stance in relation to how we may influence our research directions, design, data collection, analysis and interpretations (Creswell, 2013). It is important to be conscious of and communicate “the biases, values, and experiences” (p. 216) that the researcher brings to the study. In following Creswell’s two-step approach (2013), I have in the previous section on researcher motivation described my experiences in relation to the study topic. The second part of reflexive process suggested by Creswell (2013) is to reflect on and make visible how these experiences may shape the interpretation. In the case of this study, it is evident that I came to the topic with bias – not only a deep love and value of the role of public libraries in our society, but also an excitement about the potential of library-based social work. In other words, I was approaching this inquiry from the position that it is a good idea to have social workers based out of public libraries. In addition, my wife sits on the board of the Calgary Public Library and together we have had the opportunity to attend a number of library conferences where my knowledge and support of public libraries in Canada only grew stronger. In order to ensure that there was no conflict of interest, my wife did not participate in this research directly and Calgary Public Library was not at any point involved in this study.

In the Validation section in Chapter 2, I describe in detail the measures I took specific to case study research to mitigate bias. Briefly, these included: triangulation of methods in which I used surveys, interviews, and document analysis; and triangulation of sources in which I included perspectives across Canada from a variety of library and social work positions.

1.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sought to add to the extremely limited literature on Canadian library social work with the aim of increasing the social work discipline's base-level knowledge and awareness regarding the motivations to initiate public library social work programs and services, and the nature of this library-based social work practice. By completing this research, I believe that I have helped to build awareness and appreciation of this burgeoning field within my own social work university circles and ultimately beyond. I hope that the findings and implications for social work practice will be utilized to advocate for further research in the area, to create more support to our fellow social workers who are on the leading edge of this promising new practice, and to increase the attention toward systems-level discussions to the possibilities inherent in library social work that can improve the support provided to our most vulnerable citizens.

1.8 Thesis overview

Following this introduction is Chapter 2, which is a literature review that provides context of public libraries in Canada, their challenges, and an overview of what is known about library social work thus far in North America. Chapter 3 explores the mixed methods multicase design used in the current study, along with the history, origins, philosophical, and methodological underpinnings therein. Chapter 4 is the first of two chapters on findings. This chapter presents the main findings of the online study. Chapter 5 first introduces the individual cases and then moves into a comprehensive cross-case analysis that includes illustrative direct quotes from participants and documentation. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a discussion that summarizes the main findings of the current study in relation to the relevant literature, as well as implications for social work practice and recommendations for research.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

This literature review begins with an explanation of the approach that I utilized. It then turns to exploration of the ongoing evolution of urban public libraries into community hubs, and the main challenges faced by Canadian urban libraries: funding and serving marginalized or vulnerable library users, and those with complex needs. From there I describe how urban public libraries are responding to these challenges, and the two significant distinctly Canadian approaches of social inclusion frameworks and community-led service models that are driving their work. Following the broader discussion of the public library evolution, relevance, challenges, and underlying theoretical drivers to responses, I turn toward an examination of what connects the library and social work disciplines, specifically in terms of the aims and ethics of the two fields as they relate to community development and social justice. Subsequently I discuss traditional and non-traditional contexts for social work, followed by an overview of the specific trend of social workers within public libraries in more detail. The literature review chapter concludes with a summary and limitations of the literature.

2.1 Literature review approach

Because this is a relatively new area of practice and research, this literature review encompasses both peer-reviewed academic publications and significant grey literature in order to gather sufficient information. I accessed three categories of academic databases in the review. I located the social work literature in SocINDEX, Social Work Abstracts, and Social Services Abstracts. I located library sciences literature in Library and Information Science Databases (LISA), and Library & Information Science Source. The third multi-disciplinary category includes Academic Search Complete and Google Scholar.

Table 1 lays out the inclusion and exclusion criteria. I set a lengthier time frame in order to capture a robust cross-section of literature because of the newness of the field. I searched keywords

for the entire text, and did not place limitations to restrict search results to abstracts, titles, or subjects because I wanted to include as many relevant articles on this topic as possible, and the number of articles to screen was manageable. I conducted the literature review as a first formal round between February to April 2017, throughout the data collection process, and then again between February to April 2018 after I had written my analysis.

In order to capture professional trends, reports, and general practices, the grey literature search takes into account library and social work professional associations and conference materials, individual public library websites, and media publications. I initially began with the same key words and inclusion criteria as for the academic literature (see Table 1). Once I began to identify relevant grey literature publications, I used the snowball method to search reference lists of selected literature to locate additional publications. As a result of this process, I also expanded my initial grey and academic literature parameters to include new vocabulary that I had discovered: “library social work”, “library-based social work”, “library hubs”, and “whole person librarianship”. I continued to limit my search parameters in the grey literature to the North American context due to the scope of the project and restricted resources of a graduate student.

Table 1

Literature Review Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Publication range from 1970 – present • Canada and the United States • Urban focus • Keywords: public or municipal or regional librar* AND social work* or social justice or social issue* or social service* or social inclusion or social exclusion or homelessness or community development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a language other than English • Published prior to 1970 • Countries other than Canada and the United States • Focus not directly on the intersection between social work and public libraries (academic, law, oil and gas and other specialized libraries are not included)

2.2 Public libraries and Canadian society – a time of change

Although various types of public libraries have existed in Canada over the past two centuries, tax-supported public libraries emerged in North America in the mid-1800s and the first legislation enabling the establishment of public libraries in Canada occurred in 1882 (Leckie & Hopkins, 2002). The Canadian public library system as it now operates began in the late 1930s, culminating in Parliament's establishment of The National Library of Canada in 1953 when our national system of libraries was born (Wilson, 2008). At present there are just over six hundred urban Canadian public libraries under the purview of provincial and territorial governments; they are mainly governed by corresponding library acts that outline their purpose and duties (OCLC, 2014). In 2011 the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) published its *Analysis of Public Library Trends*, noting that in Canada, "the library environment has undergone substantial change over the course of the past decade and libraries are meeting new challenges" (2011, p. 2).

In this era of widespread internet access and technological innovation, public libraries are re-inventing themselves in Canada, the United States, and globally as community and cultural centers that are the "people's palace" (Berndtson, 2013, p. 119). An article published in the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) described the transformation of librarianship from a profession mainly devoted to provision, storage, and protection of information resources to one with a main vision of public libraries as community centers that strive to connect people with the information they need for their well-being (Hines, 2015).

Public librarianship has increasingly become an information-enabled social service and education profession. The internationally focused book *Perspectives on Libraries as Institutions of Human Rights and Social Justice* (Gorham, Green, & Jaeger, 2016) argued that public libraries' social responsibilities have expanded significantly in recent years because it is where many people,

through the digital inclusion that technology access provides, increase their education, find jobs, build up their businesses, become civically active, and take part in social media. Gorham et al. (2016) also noted that, different from the pre-internet era when libraries made changes to materials, locations, and outreach, in this period of time libraries must also “act as change agents to improve their communities” (p. 3).

This approach was signalled as long as a decade ago in Canada, when for example the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture commissioned a report on how public libraries needed to change. Its title *Third Generation Public Libraries* (2008) derived from author Shannon Mattern's notion of public libraries that the public itself plays a part in designing, and the report explained how this concept reaches past architectural considerations into partnerships and services. In this report, key aspects of how libraries planned to respond to changing social, technological, and economic environments included vision statements such as: “The public library of the future will work more systematically with partners, including government, to integrate newcomers and socially marginalized people” (p. 3).

This strategic planning framework remains in line with the experiences and perspectives of modern-day libraries. This is exemplified in *Developing Community-led Public Libraries: Evidence from the US and Canada* (2013), a work written by British researcher Jon Pateman, now the CEO of Thunder Bay Public Library, and Canadian researcher and Halifax Public Library CEO Ken Williment. According to this text, public libraries in Canada, Britain, the United States, and elsewhere are in the process of reinvention – moving toward community centre models in order to reach new residents. Similarly, a Heritage Saskatchewan position paper (2017) observed that in this era of transformational public library change due to evolving technology, in modern society the third spaces of public libraries are vital to community life because they provide opportunities for

individual growth and life-long learning, and they support community development by building social cohesion and promoting democratic processes via free public access to information and ideas.

Similarly, the website for the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), which represents approximately 12,200 public library workers across Canada, provides a library staff sector profile that likewise explains how libraries often operate as central community hubs. For instance, after the 2008 recession, “visits to libraries surged as community members flocked there to search for jobs, upgrade their education, and sometimes just find a safe place to be” (2016, para. 18).

The evolution of public libraries within our modern communities is being documented and discussed not only by relevant government bodies, library associations, and academic journals, but also by Canadian mainstream media. A recent *Maclean's* article pointed out that today's public libraries are about access to knowledge as well as to technology and key social supports – fast becoming “an essential community hub in modern urban settings” (Bethune, 2018, para. 2). One Canadian public library spokesperson recently noted in a media interview that public libraries must evolve and be as relevant and useful to the community as possible because they serve an absolute cross-section of society in their libraries, which includes patrons with complex needs (Bueckert, 2017).

Finally, an initiative launched in February 2018 involving Canadian libraries in Windsor, Essex County, and Chatham-Kent has created a project entitled Library Hubs Meeting Community Needs (LHMCN), which asserts that libraries are a place for connection and opportunity. The aim of the project is to support libraries in helping library users experiencing poverty and homelessness. It has created an evidence-based toolkit and advocates “for creating a community hub of social services within the library system” (LHMCN, 2018, para. 1) that can be utilized to identify, reduce, and eliminate barriers to individuals with complex needs. Its goals are social service navigation; the

reduction of stigma; literacy and information sharing; and building sustainable community partnerships.

2.3 Challenges facing urban Canadian libraries

2.3.1 Funding

One main challenge facing Canadian public libraries is funding, which influences the ability of these libraries to incorporate social workers. Contrary to other global contexts, Canadian governments were relatively better off than many others during the 2008 worldwide recession; as a result, Canadian libraries have not experienced the large-scale austerity measures targeting public libraries at the levels seen elsewhere (Martinez & Williment, 2011). Despite this relative stability compared to other places, funding does continue to be a persistent challenge for many Canadian libraries. In an exploratory case study examining the social influence in decision-making processes to increase funding for Alberta public libraries, the authors noted that discussions in research and professional publications focus on “funding and the tenuous economic circumstances faced by library budgets” (Stenstrom & Haycock, 2014, p. 49). The authors asserted that in this time when public libraries are increasingly well-used with higher demands, funding continues to be an issue.

CUPE’s library profile (2016) indicates that there have been serious threats to public library budgets in some areas. For example, in Toronto in 2011, the municipal government attempted to cut library funding by 10%. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the government drastically cut library budgets in 2013 and more recently announced plans to close 54 libraries. CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador managed to gain a temporary halt to library closures and the grace period for their public libraries has been extended until the system review is complete (Tobin, 2017). As this example illustrates, “the decisions leading to annual funding allotments for libraries can be complicated, with many factors influencing the final outcome” (Stenstrom & Haycock, 2014, p. 51).

One of the challenges faced by libraries is in cultivating positive relationships with government decision makers and maintaining credibility with key stakeholders (Stenstrom & Haycock, 2014). In an American survey, librarians and senior staff with advocacy responsibilities recognized that persuasive advocacy is vital to gaining support and funding from local government and library boards, “but note that their efforts to convince funders of the value of the library often fail because of the recurrent misperception of leaders that traditional services are no longer necessary—a luxury in times of fiscal crisis” (Rathbun-Grubb & Marshall, 2009, p. 266). One significant gap observed by Canadian public library researcher Diane Mittermeyer (1999) was what elected leaders and librarians each perceived as the most essential public library roles and services. This challenge was further articulated as a general need for library staff, educators, and researchers to better communicate the needs of their residents and communities to policymakers, politicians, funders, and other stakeholders (Gorham, Taylor, & Jaeger, 2016).

While there has been a trend in some areas of Canada to reduce funding for public libraries (Griffins & Johnson, 2014), statistics show strong continued use with over half of Canadians visiting public libraries annually: “Canadians visit the library almost as much as we go to the movies and 20 times more often than we attend Canadian NHL games each year” (OCLC, 2014, p. 1). Public libraries’ increased revenue needs have mainly been filled by the municipal level of government (CULC, 2011), and although federal and provincial funding exists, municipalities invest more in public libraries than the former two combined (CUPE, 2016). Thus, the challenges related to funding of public libraries vary according to context.

2.3.2 Poverty and homelessness in Canada

A second major challenge facing Canadian public libraries is the increasing number of library users living in poverty and experiencing housing instability who spend long periods of time in the

branches, especially in urban centres (Clevette & Halberstadt, 2015). In Canada, poverty affects more than three million people (Government of Canada, Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2018). Based on the measure of Low Income Cut-offs, which are income thresholds below which a family devotes a bigger amount of its income food, shelter and clothing than the average family, 8.8% of Canadians, were living under the low income cut-off (Government of Canada, A Backgrounder on Poverty in Canada, 2017, p. 1). The Backgrounder on Poverty in Canada (2017) document also stated that when looking at the Market Basket Measure, which defines low income according to a specific set of goods and services representing a standard of living, 11.3% or 3.9 million Canadians are considered low income. A third measure used is the Low Income Measure, which defines low income as being below a fixed percentage income, and by this measure, 13% or 4.5 million Canadians have an income that is below 50% of median household incomes (p. 1). According to this document, the groups of Canadians that are more likely to be living in states of poverty over longer periods of time include: “single people aged 45-64, single parents, recent immigrants (those living in Canada for less than 10 years), people with disabilities and Indigenous people” (p. 2).

In 2016, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness put out a *State of Homelessness in Canada* report that stated mass homelessness emerged in the 1980s as a result of “a massive disinvestment in affordable housing, structural shifts in the economy and reduced spending on social supports” (p. 4). It provided the following statistics: 35,000 Canadians are homeless on a given night; at least 235,000 Canadians experience homelessness in a year; 27.3% of these are women and 18.7% are youth. The number of older adults and seniors experiencing homelessness is growing. Families stay in shelters twice as long as individuals. Between 28-34% of the shelter population is Indigenous. The report noted that “while poverty and the resulting housing affordability can be a problem in both urban and rural areas, it is particularly an issue in large cities, because this is where the housing costs

tend to be the highest” (p. 72). The authors also pointed out that urban areas will experience greater migration as people seek better opportunities. The report advocated that ending homelessness in Canada “requires partnership across public, private, and not-for-profit sectors” (p. 4), which would include public libraries.

2.3.3 Serving library users with complex needs

Public libraries have been called “third-sector” community organizations, serving street-living community members often by default (Giesler, 2017). Giesler’s qualitative study on American Midwestern public libraries in eight urban and suburban communities found that libraries frequently act as makeshift shelters and there are challenges with consistent implementation of code of conduct policy with homeless library users. In another American article on stressors affecting public libraries, difficult and high-needs library users were increasingly cited as a source of stress for public librarians, with the increase of “homeless, mentally ill, and/or potentially disruptive or dangerous people use the library facilities as shelters during the day” (Jordan, 2014, p. 291).

While the previously cited research studies are located in the United States, Canadian public libraries are facing similar challenges. As socioeconomic inequity grows globally, homeless library users and other marginalized individuals who at earlier times were often banned or shunned from public libraries in the United States and Canada are now welcomed into the spaces as part of concerted efforts at outreach and assistance (Hines, 2015). A Canadian study exploring the experiences of how homeless men use the Vancouver public libraries (McKendry, 2013) found that “public space in libraries is especially valuable to homeless people who have no private space of their own. Amenities such as washrooms, comfortable seating, access to the Internet” (p. ii) drew the individuals to the Central Library in particular. It is thought that about 10 to 20 per cent of homeless individuals regularly use American and Canadian public libraries; however it is difficult to determine

the number of library users who are homeless because libraries generally do not keep records of this kind of information (McKendry, 2013).

Within this context, Canadian public libraries report increasing numbers of people with complex needs and multiple barriers accessing their branches, along with the subsequent increasing demand for their connection to social services (Clevette & Halberstadt, 2015). This can sometimes create challenges for library staff. In a Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) study of over 500 library workers in British Columbia, for instance, the findings indicated that library staff witness, and are often responsible for addressing verbal threats, library users under the influence of drugs or alcohol, theft, and misuse of online tools for the viewing of explicit material; moreover, in this survey over 65 per cent of library staff respondents stated that they had been exposed to biohazards such as urine, feces, bed bugs, and used needles (para. 12). The CUPE website reports that library staff are facing workplace health and safety concerns, and require support from social work professionals, as summarized in its Library Profile page:

Public libraries are among the last safe, public spaces that are open to all. They are a safe haven for people who are homeless, or battling addictions or mental health challenges.

Library workers interact with marginalized and vulnerable populations daily, and are often called upon to perform duties more commonly associated with social work – but with little to no training in skills such as conflict resolution. (2016, para. 13)

2.4 Public library responses

Despite the tension and debate that exist on the role and responsibility that public libraries have in ensuring that socially excluded populations such as homeless citizens have their needs met (Hoyer, 2013), the director of advocacy at the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, summarized this conflict succinctly, “Libraries are on the front line, whether they want to be or not”

(Simpson, 2014, para. 7). Today's public libraries can play a major part in serving all people and they have an important opportunity to work toward equity and change lives (Blank, 2014). There is an increasing openness in public library contexts to serve people no matter their socioeconomic status (Hines, 2015).

News stories, professional literature publications, and presentations from an array of Canadian and American cities celebrate public library programs and services that attempt to address social inequity, arguing that part of public libraries' democratizing mission is in fact not only provision of equal access to information, but also the promotion of social justice through assisting library users with information, referrals, and access to social welfare programs (Hines, 2015). To this end, public libraries have embarked upon working with their increasingly diverse communities in developing innovative partnerships and unique programs "often in combination with other public and non-profit service agencies that are also dealing with dwindling budgets" (Green et al., 2016, p. 3). Many public libraries in Canada and the United States actively connect and reach out to at-risk and marginalized populations, most notably homeless individuals (Hines, 2015). To illustrate, head Toronto librarian stated that the Toronto Public Library is part of the municipality's overall poverty-reduction strategy and as such aims to place more resources into branches located in particularly at-risk neighbourhoods (Bethune, 2018).

Giesler (2017) noted that in part as a response to the challenges of homelessness and complex needs of some library users, professional library organizations such as the American Library Association (ALA) have created policies to acknowledge and address that homeless people must live and dwell in public places often because of society's failure to create adequate shelter or affordable housing options. Recent ALA policies include "provisions that the libraries remove barriers to accessing services, improve services to the poor, and train their staff about the needs of poor people.

The policy additionally encourages libraries to actively advocate for community services for these populations” (p. 190).

The ALA further describes a variety of social service models located in the United States; some models consist of outreach teams that target the community’s homeless population while others have turned their attention to the creation of accessible resource directories such as Baltimore County library’s street card, a wallet-sized listing of local supports (Kelley et al., 2017). In February 2017, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA) endorsed the ALA’s statement defending library core values of:

Access to information, privacy, democracy, equity, diversity and inclusion, intellectual freedom, and social responsibility. Libraries are safe and inclusive spaces that build social capital and support discovery and creation. CFLA/FCAB and Canadian libraries stand together in unity with our American library colleagues in support of welcoming and inclusive communities. (2017, para. 1)

2.4.1 Social inclusion and community development approaches

The response of Canada’s public libraries in striving to better serve marginalized and vulnerable library users is becoming recognized internationally, with two distinct interrelated trends that could have major impacts on the advancement of public library services – the incorporation of social inclusion frameworks and community-led service models (Martinez & Williment, 2011). This section provides an overview of how these two concepts and applications to practice are found within public libraries, along with how the field of social work similarly has strong connections to these approaches.

2.4.1.1 Social inclusion

Despite the high statistics of library use and the high praise for the role of Canadian public libraries in strengthening our communities, research has also shown that there are many who do not feel welcome in library settings or who do not have access to a public library (DeFaveri, 2005). Many First Nations reserves, for instance, have no access to libraries despite the fact that Indigenous people are projected to comprise nearly five percent of Canada's population (O'Neil, 2016). There is concern that public libraries are inadequate in serving poor and socially excluded people due to the rules, fines, and information technology focus; some critics argue that public libraries, like other government bodies, "primarily serve the middle class, and so are alienating to many people" (Singh & DeFaveri, 2008, p. 4).

In the growing movement to address social exclusion and barriers traditionally facing many populations, the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) has created a social inclusion theoretical framework that is influencing the direction and work of many municipal public libraries. CULC defines social inclusion "as the participatory, authentic, and accountable manner in which institutions uphold and reinforce the principles of access, equity and, as a result, social inclusion" (2017, para. 1). This national organization advises that social inclusion is a multi-dimensional concept pertaining to employment, poverty reduction, civic engagement, discrimination and racism, and access. In addition, CULC has a social inclusion audit for public libraries as a tool and process to improve their abilities to understand and engage their communities; explore and challenge barriers; develop programs and policies; provide equitable access; and measure inclusion.

Thus, there is an increasing prevalence of social inclusion theoretical discourse within the Canadian public library systems. As a result, this language is embedded in the literature and perspectives related to library-based social work. Social inclusion theory and approaches are also

apparent in the broader social work discipline. Social inclusion originates from social exclusion theory. Since it was first popularized in the 1970's by French Secretary of State Rene Loir to refer to a state associated with extreme poverty and lack of access to the workforce, the discourse has become increasingly central to policy in the Western Europe and around the world (Mathieson et al., 2008). As an example from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs illustrates, working definitions of social inclusion and exclusion in the field of social policy are similar to CULC's:

a multi-dimensional, relational process of increasing opportunities for social participation, enhancing capabilities to fulfill normatively prescribed social roles, broadening social ties of respect and recognition, and at the collective level, enhancing social bonds, cohesion, integration, or solidarity. Social inclusion may refer to a process encouraging social interaction between people with different socially relevant attributes or an impersonal mechanism of opening up access to participation in all spheres of social life. (Silver, 2015, p. 2)

The influence of this theoretical framework is common in social work. In Canada, like many other areas globally, social inclusion theory is utilized within social research, policies, and programs for public institutions. For example, in an article on homelessness in Calgary, Alberta, the authors wrote about systemic exclusion that occurs via societal institutions (Jones, Shier, & Graham, 2013). Similarly, a social work article out of Australia critically reflected on the use of a social inclusion approach for ageing populations, observing that using a social inclusion approach is “in line with social work’s commitment to fight for social justice and equity” and “provides important perspectives ... including economic, social, and civil considerations” (Lui, Warburton, Winterton, & Bartlett, 2011, p. 276).

As a further illustration of the important role of social inclusion theory in social work, Australian social worker Jan Fook – who currently resides in the UK and who spent two years working in Canada – wrote in *Social Work: A Critical Approach to Practice* (2016) that the concept of social exclusion is growing in importance. She asserted that “social exclusion and inclusion therefore become much more than issues of poverty, referring also to the many ways in which ‘difference’ is excluded from mainstream opportunities and experiences” (p. 32). Although social inclusion is a contested area in terms of definitions and limitations, especially in relation to its linkages to the rise of neo-liberalism and individualism, the analytical potential of social inclusion theory is also recognized as having the potential to provide multi-dimensional insights into poverty, inequity, and discrimination, thus providing direction to remedial policies (Mathieson et al., 2008).

2.4.1.2 Community development approaches

Social inclusion theory has not only influenced Canadian national library association directions such as the Canadian Urban Libraries Council described above, but also the work of individual libraries that are striving to become more inclusive using a community-based approach (Pateman & Williment, 2013). Advocates of a community development model for public libraries point out the significant potential libraries have to find innovative ways to respond to exclusion, increase citizen engagement, and create positive futures (Hoyer, 2013). Indeed, there is a current shift underway in Canada and the United States toward new models of community development, outreach, and social service provision in public libraries. John Pateman, who was part of a British research team that authored *Open to All? The Public Library and Social Exclusion* (2000) that inspired the *Working Together Project* in Canada, stated that public libraries must become needs-based and community-led services transformed into democratic public spaces genuinely open to all, “the living rooms of the community” (Pateman, 2014, para. 15).

Pateman's (2000) research resonated in the Canadian public library world and caused librarians to question the perceived social inclusiveness of public library services, as well as test innovative ways to develop and implement library services with excluded communities using a collaborative approach (Martinez & Williment, 2011). Canadian researcher and library CEO Ken Williment described the resulting Canadian four-year, four-city *Working Together Project* (2009) in which librarians from Vancouver, Regina, Toronto, and Halifax public libraries used a community-practitioner-based approach to engage with thousands of socially excluded individuals from diverse communities in the four large Canadian urban centres. These communities included immigrants, refugees, Indigenous people, individuals living in poverty, people living with or recovering from mental illness, individuals exiting federal institutions, and at-risk youth. The aim of the project was to embark upon "discussions based upon the lived experiences of socially excluded community members and the librarians who engage with them as equal members of the community" (p. 1).

Based on this work, The Community-Led Service Planning Model was created (*Working Together*, 2008). Building upon the traditional library service model, community-led service planning provides a new model which facilitates library staff and community member engagement with the purpose of identifying and meeting community needs. Key to this is the inclusion of traditionally socially-excluded community members, who are involved throughout the steps from needs assessment to evaluation of the community-led service development process. Williment (2009) emphasized the essential component of relationships as the basis of the Community-Led Service Planning Model.

Even more recently, Pateman and Williment wrote *Developing Community-Led Public Libraries: Evidence from the UK and Canada* (2013), which offered public libraries a road map to library staff looking to integrate and sustain community-led approaches within their libraries. In this

volume, Pateman and Williment stated that tightening budgets create a real danger that library management and decision-makers will react by returning to traditional approaches of service. They strongly urged, “A needs-based and community-led approach enables library services to be targeted at the underserved and the library becomes an agent of social change and social justice” (p. 2).

Community-based social work similarly focuses on social change, social justice, empowerment and active participation of community members. *Social Work Practice: Problem Solving and Beyond* (Heinonen & Spearman, 2010) described community social work as a type of social work practice that is community-based and incorporating community members as part of action and outreach. Similar to the community-led approaches used within public libraries, in community work “social workers act as facilitators of community members’ efforts, advocating for them and fostering skills in leadership and other capacities among them rather than taking the lead themselves” (p. 188).

The notion of being strengths or asset-based is also found in both library and social work community development approaches. An example of influential community development approaches within Canadian social work contexts is the Tamarack Institute (2017), an organization whose aim is to foreground collective action as well as outcomes. The Tamarack Institute champions Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), which is a strengths-based approach initially developed by John McNight and used by many community social workers. In *A Brief Introduction to Social Work Theory*, David Howe (2009) likewise articulated that a strengths-based, asset-oriented approach can be a useful theoretical approach for community development social workers in helping community members to “recognize needs, pool strengths, identify solutions, and bring about change” (p. 106).

Finally, the research-based development of the community-led service model that is influencing the direction of some modern Canadian urban public libraries, as described earlier, is also

mirrored in the field of social work. In social work literature, there is a growing use of the transformative framework in which the underlying assumptions depend on “ethical stances of inclusion and challenging oppressive social structures [and] an entry process into the community that is designed to build trust” (Creswell, 2014, p. 71). These are approaches that contain many similarities to the description of community-led public libraries – a focus on inclusion and active participation of marginalized community members, an importance of relationships and process, and underlying motivations related to broader social justice goals.

Participatory action research, for example, is guided by the full and active participation of community members (generally involving those who have been excluded, marginalized, oppressed) and is meant to originate from and be led by the community itself (van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011). In social work community based research, much like that found in public library community development approaches, there is a continuum from participatory action to conventional research; van de Sande and Schwartz (2011) provided a conceptualization from McDonald (2007), where the continuum begins with research that incorporates few elements of community engagement to one where community members are equal partners.

2.5 Social work in non-traditional urban settings

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) website page “Where do social workers work?” lists the following settings for social work practice: family services agencies, children’s aid agencies, general and psychiatric hospitals, school boards, correctional institutions, welfare administration agencies, federal and provincial departments, private practice. It is evident that libraries are not yet seen as settings in which social work practice is commonly conducted and could therefore be considered a non-traditional social work setting at this time. As libraries are becoming increasingly non-traditional in their approach to working within

communities, so too has the social work field broadened its approach to traditional and non-traditional kinds of social work (Delgado, 1999).

In Delgado's (1999) often cited volume on social work in non-traditional urban settings, he advocated for the potential of social work partnerships with non-traditional urban settings to "redirect practice from deficits to strengths, from an education to an enhancement model" (p. 7). He observed that the social work profession has focused on vendorship, licensing, managed care, and office-based work, resulting in a pulling back from community. By working in non-traditional settings, social workers can "facilitate the reestablishment of the profession's connectedness with undervalued communities" (p. 7). Utilizing ethnographic case studies of bath houses, beauty parlors/barbershops, botanical shops, ethnic businesses, houses of worship, laundromats, liquor establishments, night clubs, single-occupancy hotels, Delgado set up an analytical framework for non-traditional social work practice that included four elements: social embeddedness; urban sanctuaries; free spaces; and social/natural support systems (p. 70). Delgado stated that for social embeddedness, non-traditional settings represent an important source of social capital, especially for urban communities. Urban sanctuaries represent areas other than home where people can retreat, feel safe, understood, and accepted – public libraries are listed in this section. They provide refuge and enrichment. Free spaces are places where people can learn self-respect, deeper identity, skills, and the values of cooperation and civic virtue – they are places existing in between private spaces and large-scale institutions. Social and natural support systems are located in non-traditional settings for social work practice.

Delgado proposed that social workers and social service organizations should incorporate collaborative work within non-traditional settings as part of their work. He stated that the profession must "strategically define itself as having the capacity (vision, knowledge, skills) to

address major social problems within an urban context. To accomplish this goal, we must be prepared to have the courage to be innovative in all aspects of the practice” (p. 216). Public urban libraries can be considered a promising place for social work practice in non-traditional settings (Kelley et al., 2017).

2.6 Shared core disciplinary values

The notion that social workers and librarians have shared core disciplinary values and practices is not new – the focus on social service for both fields has roots in the populist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and today “we’re living in what may become a golden age of library-social work collaboration” (Zettervall, 2015, p. 12). There are a number of strong shared core disciplinary values between social work and library sciences. The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics states:

The social work profession is dedicated to the welfare and self-realization of all people; the development and disciplined use of scientific and professional knowledge; the development of resources and skills to meet individual, group, national and international changing needs and aspirations; and the achievement of social justice for all. The profession has a particular interest in the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and/or living in poverty. (2005, p. 3)

Similarly, the International Federation for Library Associations and Institutions’ (IFLA) professional code of ethics for librarians, which has been endorsed by Canada, declares that “information service in the interest of social, cultural and economic wellbeing is at the heart of librarianship and therefore librarians have social responsibility” (para. 6); furthermore, the code states:

In order to promote inclusion and eradicate discrimination, librarians and other information workers ensure that the right of accessing information is not denied and that equitable services are provided for everyone whatever their age, citizenship, political belief, physical or mental ability, gender identity, heritage, income, immigration and asylum-seeking status, marital status, origin, race, religion or sexual orientation. (para.16)

Green et al. (2016), observed that libraries “are part of the social justice infrastructure of society” (p. 10). Likewise, in social work, a hallmark of the social work profession is to promote diversity and social justice by actively engaging with community members (Kelley et al., 2017). Social workers, as community practitioners, strive to address conditions of inequity to bring resources, power, and capacity to people; similarly, in many places, it is the public library that seeks both to support and empower library users through accessible information and resources (Kelly et al., 2017).

2.7 Public library social workers

Just as law enforcement has been called the front line of mental health services, for many living in poverty in municipalities across North America, “the library is the social worker of first and last resort” (Cepeda, 2016, para. 2). A November 2014 opinion piece in *The New Social Worker* pointed to the emergence of this cross-disciplinary work, reporting the small but growing trend for libraries to include social workers as professionals on staff (Blank, 2014). While it was five decades ago when the notion of public libraries as connected to information about social service agencies first began, it has mainly been within the recent decade that public libraries have started employing dedicated social work personnel (Kelley et al., 2017). The research literature is also taking notice, with an edited compilation of diverse perspectives pointing to how librarians, while often struggling

to meet the overwhelming demands, have nevertheless created impressive responses, including the hiring of social workers (Gorham, Green & Jaeger, 2016).

In a 2015 paper published via the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) on the results of an international survey conducted on the public libraries and social services, Hines wrote about the library's social justice role in connecting individuals with social services, explaining that some libraries have initiated programs to connect disadvantaged people with social services, and that in the United States and Canada the practice has primarily been "through the hiring of social workers or public health workers within public libraries, or through outreach and engagement programs focused on improving employment prospects for communities" (p. 1).

Hines (2015) further explained that many libraries looking to connect library users with social service resources "have come to the realization that professional social workers can best facilitate this connection due to their specialized training" (p. 4). As a result, they have started to hire social workers rather than librarians in this role, and although some are beginning to devote library budgetary funds to these positions, most depend upon grant funding first to demonstrate the value, and then to pursue funding to continue the programs.

Thus, including social workers is part of a growing trend to meet the needs of libraries as they work with their community residents in Canada and the United States (Bueckert, 2017). The trend is commonly reported as originating at the San Francisco Public Library (SPL) in 2009, with Leah Esguerra, a psychiatric social worker hired as the country's first library-based social worker; this program has grown to include seven Health and Safety Associates, many of whom were homeless at one time and who now help build bridges with empathy and offer resources like addictions treatment referrals, housing, and other case management services (Fraga, 2016). The program has increased to

four other library branches in the system, and Esguerra stated that she hopes every library will eventually have social services and social workers, much like nurses in schools (Baer, 2016).

The SPL program sparked interest and the practice of library-based social workers has gained momentum, with 24 public libraries in the United States currently incorporating social services and social workers (Fraga, 2016). One notable example is San Jose's Public Library's Social Workers in the Library (SWITL) program, which was the focus of an evaluation that found the unique public service model involving volunteer social workers who provided information, consultation, and referrals at the public library in collaboration with library staff "greatly enhances public access to quality information on social services and reinforces the value of public libraries as a community resource" (Luo et al., 2012, p. 80).

Initiated in 2009 and cited as one of the best developed programs, it is comprised of two to three social workers (professionals as well as students and staff from the San Jose State University's School of Social Work) who twice per month spend two hours at the library working with clients in 20-minute blocks. The program was developed in partnership with the San Jose Public Library and the local chapter of the NASW, which first conducted a needs assessment and then developed the pilot program. It was modelled after the existing Lawyers in the Library program and the objective was "to seek ways to increase access to information regarding local social service programs" (p. 74). Since the start of the program, SWITL has assisted more than 100 library users; library staff and social workers have stated that it supports and furthers the social justice and democratizing missions within both professions (Luo et al., 2012).

Building on this, a recent 2017 study entitled "Determining the Need for Social Work Practice in a Public Library" described a study of an American community-university partnership in Los Angeles County, California to help libraries seek creative ways to provide social services to

library users; using a community development approach and gap analysis framework, 32 library users were surveyed and five staff members were interviewed to support the provision of social work practice at the American urban public library (Kelley et al., 2017). The partnership between the local university and public library resulted in sufficient data for the librarian to put together a successful grant for a part-time social work position called the Community Resource Specialist, who provides services including assessments and referrals; moreover, the project has morphed into an ongoing partnership between the library and the university's Department of Social Work.

The number of library social workers appears to be growing swiftly with each passing year (Kelley et al., 2017). For instance, the Massachusetts Library System presented a webinar on "Building Public Library/Social Work Partnerships: Three Success Stories" (2018) in which they shared the Boston Public Library's experience with hiring a social worker, the Somerville Public Library's decision to hire a Health Services Coordinator, and the Forbes Library in Northampton's successful partnership with a homeless outreach social worker. Moreover, according to the *Whole Person Librarianship* blog entirely devoted to public library social work in the United States, author Sara Zettervall observed that there were few public libraries with social workers on staff in 2013 when it was founded, and that their blog was "the only space collecting and sharing the burgeoning movement" (2018, para. 1). She noted that over time, the collaborations between the disciplines of librarianship and social work have expanded.

This occurrence is echoed by a Canadian library manger, who asserted that the idea of social workers in the library is becoming increasingly common in Canada (Hadley, 2016). As the trend increases, other libraries across Canada like Regina's Public Library, are paying keen attention (Reith, 2014). In some cases such as in Newfoundland and Saskatchewan, lack of funding rather than lack of interest is the barrier (Labine, 2017). A 2016 Master of Library and Information Sciences course

study also described a Community-Led Services partnership project between Dalhousie University, Shelter Nova Scotia, and Halifax Public Libraries (Humes, 2016). As part of their findings, the author states, “It is our long-term recommendation and desire that Halifax Public Libraries join this group of socially-minded public libraries” (Humes, 2016, para. 21).

In Canada, this preliminary literature search has located within the grey literature mention of social workers within a number of municipal library systems: Edmonton, Winnipeg, Kitchener, Thunder Bay, Brantford, Hamilton, and Mississauga. In addition, Regina Public Library system has begun to offer free walk-in counselling through a partnership with Family Service Regina, a local not-for-profit which received a one-year grant to expand their service in an accessible location (CBC, 2018). The first of these was Edmonton Public Library (EPL), which launched a pilot program in 2011 originally modelled after the San Francisco library initiative (Ramsay, 2014).

EPL’s social work program has evolved into a community-led service model with partnerships, and has grown to include three registered social workers as outreach staff who are based out of four branches – the outreach program reports \$3.5 million social return on investment over a one-year period (Linton, 2016). What is more, this trend is beginning to enter the general public’s awareness and people are beginning to think of library social workers as the first place to send people they encounter who are in need, as illustrated by a February 2018 story of an Edmonton woman who caught a purse-snatcher, returned the wallet, took the thief for coffee, and then gave him directions to the public library so that he could see one of the library social workers (Snowdon, 2018).

2.8 Summary

Canadian urban public libraries, like many of their counterparts in the United States and elsewhere, are in a period of change as they evolve from institutions mainly concerned with providing information access to becoming community and cultural centres. These public libraries

are facing challenges as they reinvent themselves and seek continued relevance in today's society. As Canadian libraries strive to communicate their relevance, they sometimes encounter challenges with consistent funding as they rely primarily on municipal revenue sources. Another significant challenge faced by urban public libraries is meeting the needs of an increasing number of library users who are homeless, living in poverty, or have other complex needs.

In this climate of insecure funding and front line work with socially excluded populations, public libraries are looking for innovative solutions. Public libraries in the United States and Canada are seeking new diverse partnerships, collaborations, models, and opportunities to address social inequity. Distinct trends within Canadian urban public library responses that are becoming internationally recognized are nationwide urban social inclusion frameworks and community-led service models. Social inclusion and community development approaches are also commonly found in social work research, policy, and practice.

The social work and library disciplines share core values and principles related to equity, social justice, human rights, access to information, enhancing well-being, meeting basic needs, and advancing diversity and inclusion. Social work practice in non-traditional settings can be advantageous within urban environments and requires collaboration and innovation. Over the last decade, there has been growing momentum of urban public libraries in the United States and Canada to include social workers within their operations and services. Whether through partnerships with local faculties of social work, community social serving agencies, or employing social work staff in the libraries, the number of library social workers appears to be growing rapidly with each passing year. Peer-reviewed evaluations of this work are slowly emerging in the research literature, and early findings indicate that adding social workers to library operations is a promising practice

2.9 Limitations of the literature

There were several limitations to the literature reviewed. The first concerns the emerging and exploratory nature of this area. On the specific topic of library social workers, this literature review was unable to locate any Canadian studies. As a result, much of the peer-reviewed literature on social workers within public libraries comes from an American perspective. A second limitation of the literature was that it primarily came from the library sciences fields. There have been relatively few publications from social work researchers to date on this emerging library social work practice, and none that I could find from Canadian social work researchers.

A final related limitation is that the literature review has necessarily had to incorporate more grey literature than would typically be desired. Again, due to the emerging and exploratory nature of this trend, much of the publishing – especially within Canada – has come from news articles and professional association writings.

2.10 Research questions

Within the context of increasing pressures on Canadian public libraries to serve community residents with complex needs and their responses to these challenges by striving to increase access, social inclusion, and community service models, this exploratory research study sought to provide much-needed empirical work in the area of Canadian library social work from a social work perspective. The current study explored the motivations of Canadian public libraries to engage social workers and examined what is occurring within and around public libraries to influence their direction to incorporate social work skills and experiences. In addition, this research project sought to explore the characteristics of this emerging area of library-based social work practice.

Therefore, this inquiry was guided by the following questions:

1. What is motivating Canadian public libraries to hire social workers?
2. What is the nature of social work practice within Canadian public libraries?

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

This chapter begins with an overview of the research design, along with its relevance and appropriateness to the research questions. Next, I provide an overview of the rationale for selecting the methodology of case study, along with the key characteristics that are applicable to the study at hand. I then turn to the research methods, which also includes sampling, data collection and analysis techniques. Finally, this chapter provides a section on the ethical issues and limitations of the study.

3.1 Research design

I have chosen mixed methods research (MMR) because it is appropriate when both statistics and stories are sought (Patton, 2015). In its approximate 30-year history, MMR has had a growth of interest in various disciplines, including social work (Creswell, 2010). Although its definition is varied and evolving, one definition commonly used in social work research (Watkins & Gioia, 2015) comes from Creswell (2015), who suggested that it is:

an approach to research in the social, behavioural, and health sciences in which the investigator gathers both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates the two, and then draws interpretations based on the combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems. (p. 2)

MMR has a general characteristic of methodological eclecticism in which the researcher can select and reintegrate the most appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods in order to more thoroughly explore a topic (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Other characteristics of MMR include paradigm pluralism, which is the assertion that a myriad of paradigms might serve as the foundational philosophy, an emphasis on diversity at all levels, a focus on continua as opposed to dichotomies, and an openness to iterative, cyclical approaches (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). In social work research, MMR is the “rigorous and epistemological application and integration of

qualitative and quantitative research approaches to draw interpretations based on the combined strengths of both approaches for the purpose of influencing social work research, practice, and policy” (Watkins & Gioia, 2015, p. 16).

Pragmatism provides a philosophical foundation for mixed methods research (Patton, 2015). This pragmatic worldview is often at play when research designs include both qualitative and quantitative data collection, and has been used in case study research (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009). In the international field of mixed methods research, pragmatism is the most commonly stated philosophy or paradigm because it helps resolve the tensions of dualisms, and is positioned to grapple with the divergent arguments of qualitative and quantitative philosophy of social science with the aim of producing workable solutions (Johnson, de Waal, Stefurak, & Hildebrand, 2017).

Creswell (2014) describes a pragmatic worldview as emerging out of “actions and situations” (p. 10). When researchers hold an interpretive framework based on pragmatism, the focus is on the actions, situations or consequences of the study and a concern with applications – the researcher is not committed to a specific or particular philosophical system or reality and researchers have freedom to choose methods and techniques that are best suited to the study’s purpose (Creswell, 2013).

Founded by American philosophers Charles Sanders Peirce (Peirce, 1992) and William James (James, 1907) in the late 19th century, pragmatism originated as a philosophical way of solving problems, positing that the initial task in an inquiry is to start with the actual situation in which we find ourselves and get clear on the conceptions that are being used; it provides a rule for doing so (called the pragmatic maxim), through social interactions in which researchers bring in their personal experiences, prejudices, and aptitudes (Johnson et al., 2017). This philosophical stance starts from the hopeful position that well-formulated questions can be answered; the most well-known

pragmatists are Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, Richard Rorty, and Susan Haack (Johnson et al., 2017).

Of these pragmatists, John Dewey's philosophy is perhaps best suited to this study as it is thought to work very well in interdisciplinary situations, taking a stand with daily life, and remaining committed to the issues and crises of life (Dewey & Hickman, 1996; Johnson et al., 2017). Dewey's theory of knowledge suggests that a "knowing that is *not* premised on the dualistic mind-world scheme ... a framework that starts with *transactions* taking place in nature and in which nature itself is understood as a moving whole of interacting parts – the key concept is experience" (Biesta, 2010, p. 106). In this interpretation of pragmatism, the way to acquire knowledge is through a combination of action and reflection and according to this pragmatist view, it is about relationships between actions and consequences (p. 111).

3.1.1 Embedded mixed methods design

The design of this study is embedded mixed methods, which is appropriate when a researcher has "different questions that require different types of data in order to enhance the application of quantitative or qualitative design to address the primary purpose of the study" (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 91). In this study, the research questions of what is motivating Canadian public libraries to engage social workers and what is the nature of social work practice within them can be more fully answered by including descriptive statistical quantitative data that provides broader contextual information (eg. how many libraries have social workers, how many libraries would like to employ social workers, what percentage of respondents hold certain attitudes and opinions, and so on) along with the core rich descriptions of perspectives from individual practitioners.

In embedded mixed methods design, the collection and analysis of the secondary data set can take place at any point before, during, and/or after the data collection and analysis processes

(Creswell & Clark, 2011). Embedded mixed methods designs are appropriate when the researcher prefers or is comfortable with having the study driven by a primary orientation and when the researcher has limited previous experience with the supplemental method and lacks resources for equal priority on both. My MSW program thus far has emphasized qualitative methods and I have not taken a quantitative course, so these are further reasons for selecting this design.

The exploratory nature of this proposed research also lends itself to an emphasis on qualitative design, especially in terms of the significant aspect of narratives within case studies in order to “approach the complexities and contradictions of real life” and capture thick descriptions (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 239). Qualitative research is an emergent design with the flexibility to change aspects of the project such as questions, methods, and recruitment - it utilizes the researcher as the key reflexive instrument to gather the data on a complex issue holistically, and researchers generally collect multiple forms of data while reporting on multiple perspectives; the focus is centered on striving to learn the meanings that participants hold on the research problem or questions (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, qualitative data is often advocated as the best strategy when exploring a new area (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which is true of this project.

The following notation is used to depict this proposed study’s embedded mixed methods design: QUAL (quan) + QUAL (quan) (Creswell, 2015). This shows that the emphasis and priority on qualitative data, analysis, and interpretation in the study. In the first part of the notation, the parenthesis indicates that the quantitative data collection is embedded in a survey that is largely comprised of qualitative open-ended questions. The quantitative data collection is embedded within the Phase 1 survey that primarily collected qualitative data through open-ended questions, but also included some Likert-scale, true/false, and demographic questions. In line with the overarching

qualitative design, the results and emerging analysis from the survey informed the interview guide and types of documents gathered in Phase 2.

In the second part of the notation, the indication is that the second phase is the collection of primarily qualitative data. The major component of Phase 2 consisted of semi-structured interviews with social workers and other key library or municipal staff. An additional data collection method is the document review, which focused on qualitative data while also incorporating some quantitative data in order to capture any numeric information such as population data. Specific methods, data collection, and analysis are discussed later in this chapter.

3.2 Case study: Origins, fit within social work & overview

Whereas ethnography's intent is to understand how a culture works, case study research aims to develop an in-depth understanding of a case - examining problems or issues using a case as an example (Creswell, 2013). Although its origins can be tracked to anthropological and sociological case studies from the early 1920s on, the case study approach has a varied and long history across a variety of disciplines (Creswell, 2013).

Because social work is a field often concerned with applied knowledge, case studies in social work are frequently used to build emergent knowledge, bridge research and practice, and forward the push for evidence-based social work practice (Lee, Mishna, & Brennenstuhl, 2010). Social work is included in a list of key disciplines that utilize case study methodology: "The case study research design occupies a central position in anthropology, archeology, business, education, history, medicine, political science, psychology, social work, and sociology" (Gerring, 2007, p. 2). Thus, the field of social work has been noted as being a good fit for the case study methodology (Yin, 2009).

Case study research will increase in relevance "the more that your questions require 'in-depth' description of some social phenomenon" (Yin, 2014, p. 4), especially one that is complex;

it enables investigators to retain a real-life and holistic perspective as they study the case. Case study enables “critical events, interventions, policy developments and programme-based service reforms to be studied in detail in a real-life context” (Crowe et al., 2011, p. 8) and should be considered when experimental design is not appropriate or is impossible to conduct. Case study, therefore, is not only a process of inquiry but also the product of that inquiry about the case (Stake, 2006). Research involving a case study aims to capture the complexity of the case (Stake, 1995).

The mixed methods design is optimal for a case study methodology in which a combination of qualitative and quantitative data can provide a more complete understanding of the cases and overall research questions (Creswell, 2014). As a naturalistic research approach used in a wide range of disciplines including the social sciences, case study is used to create a multi-faceted and in-depth picture of an issue in its real-life context (Crowe et al., 2011). In case study research, the researcher studies real-life bounded systems, otherwise known as cases, using detailed and in-depth methods of data collection that necessitate examining multiple sources such as interviews, documents, observations, and other relevant materials (Creswell, 2013).

Yin is one researcher that has been influential in the field of quantitative case study analysis, with a positivist approach asserting that case studies can explain, describe, or explore events or phenomena in their settings; in this approach, variables are established in advance and the focus is on testing and refining theory based on case study findings (Crowe et al., 2011). However, Yin (2014) has more recently written about conducting qualitative case studies as well and the current study relied on both Stake and Yin for guidance. According to Stake (1995; 2006), another researcher who has significantly influenced qualitative case study research, there are three main types of case study. Intrinsic case studies are conducted in order to learn more about a particular unique phenomenon, something that is distinguished from other phenomena. A second type is the instrumental case study,

which uses a particular case in order to better understand a broader phenomenon or issue. A third type is the collective case study, which involves studying multiple cases at the same time or sequentially in order to gain an even broader understanding of an issue or phenomenon. The current study is situated as the latter - a multiple, or multicase, study.

3.3 Multicase study

A case can range from a particular organization, an event, a program, or a phenomenon. In the social sciences and human services, the specific case is an integrated system usually with working parts and is purposive (Stake, 2006). In this study, the case is defined as urban Canadian public libraries that currently include social workers within their environments and operations. Because this is a multicase study, also referred to as multiple case or collective case study, each of the cases is a specific public library. The purpose of a multicase project, or quintain, is to explore something that has many parts or members in an attempt to try and better understand the whole - often to examine how it performs in different environments (Stake, 2006).

This is aligned with the overall purpose of my research in which I examine the overall context and attitudes related to Canadian public library social workers through the survey; followed by individual cases examination of the motivations and lived experiences those involved of library-based social work practice; and concluded with cross-case analysis to try and provide an understanding of cross-cutting themes and implications for research and practice across both social work and library disciplines.

3.4 Methods

The following section describes methods used in case study in which I provide an overview of key methods pertaining to data collection and analysis as they relate to case study.

The research process for case studies can be linear but iterative (Yin, 2014), applying both to data collection and analysis processes.

Yin (2014) also advised the following major principles for data collection, all of which I employed in this study. The first principle is the use of multiple sources of evidence (evidence from two or more sources, converging on the same findings). The second principle is the creation of a case study database, or a formal assembly of evidence, containing all case study notes, thereby maintaining a chain of evidence. When it comes to general recommendations for case study analysis, Yin (2014) also recommended, among other techniques, playing with the data in order to seek promising patterns, insights, or concepts – “the goal being to define your priorities for what you want to analyze and why... work with your data from the ‘ground up’” (p. 132). I employed the above principles and techniques in the data collection and analysis within this study, explained in detail later in the paper.

3.4.1 Triangulation

Within the boundaries of time and activity of the case, researchers use a myriad of data collection techniques in order to collect detailed information (Creswell, 2014). Triangulation of data “for a multicase study serves the same purpose as in a single-case study: to assure that we have the picture as clear and suitably meaningful as we can get it” (Stake, 2006, p. 77). This same essential foundational concept of triangulation within case study inquiry is explained as relying on multiple evidence sources, “with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (Yin, 2014, p. 17). Triangulation was a key methods focus in this study.

3.4.2 Qualitative & quantitative data

As the predominant part of this research project involved qualitative data collection and analysis, it is important to lay out the nature of qualitative data and fundamental principles of working with this kind of approach.

Miles and Huberman (1994) observed that the nature of qualitative data - which consists of words based on observations, interviews or documents - requires processing and that the “apparent simplicity of qualitative data masks a good deal of complexity, requiring plenty of care and self-awareness on the part of the researcher (p. 10). They urged researchers that it is vital first to remind ourselves of the main features of qualitative research: it is naturalist, and therefore generally takes place through prolonged or intense contact with a life situation, or “field”; the role of researchers is to “gain a ‘holistic’ (systemic, encompassing, integrated) overview of the context under study” (p. 6); investigators strive to capture the perceptions of local individuals “through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding” (p. 6), and a major goal is to explain the ways that people in their specific contexts “come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations” (p. 7).

This study also incorporated quantitative, or numerical, data to a much lesser extent. Up until approximately three decades ago, a positivist – also known as logical positivism or empiricism – was more commonly found in social sciences research; this is also known as the quantitative approach (Marlow, 2011). One of its central principles is that the objective collection of observations is what is needed to support theories; the major aim of quantitative approaches is to search for causes of phenomena (Marlow, 2011, p. 9). It is important to note that this study does not intend to state causality as there are no attempts at statistical associations between two factors; nor does this study

aim to be generalizable as it does not have large numbers and has not used any statistical techniques to do so (Marlow, 2011).

In this research study, I kept the principles regarding working with data outlined above close at hand throughout the process. I elaborate on this later in the paper.

3.4.2.1 Qualitative & quantitative data analysis

In qualitative data analysis, it is possible to have many and multiple interpretations of the data; however, some may be deemed more compelling due to theoretical rationale, or on argued basis of internal consistency (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This same text stated that the researcher is essentially the tool, or the “main ‘measurement device’ in the study” (p. 7) as most of the analysis is conducted and completed using words. The authors also referred to case study and noted that the task in analysis is to stretch across the multiplicity of data sources in order to condense them.

General qualitative data analysis techniques detailed by Miles and Huberman (1994) include assigning codes to interview transcripts, marking reflections and follow-up notes on the page; looking through the writings to take note of repeated phrases, patterns, themes, and comparisons between categories and common sequences; and then applying any learnings to subsequent waves of data collection.

In this study, to a much lesser degree I utilized quantitative components. I employed basic descriptive methods in which I analyzed and summarized survey data found in an existing dataset (Marlow, 2011). I displayed the survey results using numeric representation, graphic representation, and tabular representation (Marlow, 2011).

Again, these are all understandings of data analysis that I brought to the study at hand, which are further detailed below.

3.4.3 Summary of methods

Case study methods can vary according to design: quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. This section explored major consideration for case study data collection and analysis methods, the primary of which is triangulation. It also explored the nature of qualitative data as the current study has an emphasis on the collection and analysis of this type of data. The next section looks at the particular methods used in the current multicase study.

3.5 Current study

This section details the current study's methods, guided by a primarily qualitative multicase framework. First is an overview of the study's sampling strategy and recruitment techniques, followed by the data collection methods. Next is a discussion of the data analysis. This section closes with an assessment of the study's trustworthiness, ethics, and limitations.

3.5.1 Sampling and recruitment

3.5.1.1 Phase 1 – Online Survey

The first phase of the study consisted of an online survey instrument whose purpose was the initial contextual information-gathering before embarking on the case studies. A goal of this survey was to provide a snapshot across Canada of realities, perceptions, and opinions regarding the research questions guiding this inquiry: 1) What is motivating Canadian public libraries to hire social workers; and 2) What is the nature of social work practice within Canadian public libraries. The purpose was also to help inform the design of case study interview guides. The current study used purposeful (non-probability) criterion-based sampling (Patton, 2015). In purposeful sampling, "the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 156).

I completed a pilot in which two librarians, a social work instructor, a social work graduate student, and a public library board member provided feedback on the questions and structure. I distributed the finalized survey via Survey Monkey in English across Canada from July to September 2017. The survey was aimed at staff currently employed within a Canadian public library and distributed within multiple listservs across Canada with an invitation for recipients to forward the link to any other potential participants. These included The Partnership listserv, which is comprised of representatives from the provincial and territorial library associations in Canada, who were asked to forward the information onto their membership totalling 7500 people; Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) listserv, which consists of the CEO's for the larger urban libraries in Canada; and the Provincial and Territorial Public Library Council (PTPLC) listserv, which is made up of library directors that report to the provincial and territorial deputy ministers responsible for public libraries.

It collected quantitative and qualitative data on respondent demographics, roles, library location and size, and perspectives on social work practice within public libraries. Please refer to Appendix A for an example of the survey consent form.

I utilized an online survey to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The advantage is that they are easy to complete and submit, providing a cost effective method of rapidly collecting and sharing results. I followed the recommendations in Marlow (2011): attempt to create relatively neutral questions and avoid biased, leading questions; provide clear directions; make the survey as short as possible (used branching); place the more sensitive demographic questions at the end; and send follow-up invitations (p. 170). Limitations of online surveys are degree of interviewer involvement, which can lead to issues of non-observation errors in measurement connected to non-observation; lack of researcher ability to interact with respondents; influence of use of technology;

and coverage errors when there is a discrepancy between the larger target group and the actual group that responds (Toepoel, 2016).

3.5.1.2 Phase 2 – Case Study

This study used purposeful (non-probability) criterion-based case selection and snowball sampling (Patton, 2015). In addition to the specific inclusion criteria listed below, I used three broad criteria for the selection of cases: relevance; diversity across contexts; and provision of good opportunities to learn about complexity and contents (Stake, 2006). I optimally aimed for a sample size of four case studies as the benefits of multicase study are limited if fewer than four cases are chosen, or more than ten (Stake, 2006).

The inclusion criteria for each case comprised: an urban public library located in Canada that currently incorporates at least one social worker within its environment or operation.

Originally, my research question had a narrower focus of public libraries that employed social workers; however, I decided to broaden the parameters to include cases where social workers are based out of the libraries through partnerships with agencies and universities. This decision was influenced by the Phase 1 survey findings, which indicated that while public libraries were often unable to find the resources to hire full-time social work staff, they were exploring other models that enabled them to engage social workers to some degree. Therefore, when two potential cases that did not employ social workers but partnered with outside organizations to bring them into the library expressed an interest in participating, I expanded the inclusion criteria to make the study relevant to current realities and library responses.

Additional inclusion criteria included a willingness to provide access to the site, which would include semi-structured interviews with the social worker(s) and their direct librarian manager and other relevant staff; sharing of relevant documents related to the strategic planning,

vision, programming, roles, and available evaluation data pertaining to the social work practice within the library.

Exclusion criteria for this study comprised: social workers who are no longer employed by or connected with municipal urban Canadian public libraries; academic, law, oil and gas, or other specialized libraries and their staff; and lack of willingness to have target staff participate in interviews or to share sufficient documents.

3.5.1.3 Recruitment process

The formal recruitment process involved an online survey distributed to Canadian public libraries via the avenues listed above. Because no cases emerged from this initial recruitment tool, I also utilized a literature search to identify key library leader contacts across Canada through their websites; these library contacts worked in libraries that were discovered, through the literature review, to utilize or employ social workers within their operations.

Through the literature review, I located the people who had the ability to grant access for the case study. Recruitment involved sending out e-mail invitations to key staff at the relevant libraries. The literature often refers to these individuals as gatekeepers because they are the people on site who have the power to grant access and allow the research to progress (Creswell, 2014). As Creswell recommended, I developed a written backgrounder and study invitation proposal that I shared with gatekeepers in order to provide clear information on the study, including rationale for selecting the site, activities that would take place, whether or not the study would be disruptive, how results would be disseminated, what the gatekeeper may gain from participation, and what ethical issues may arise if any.

For each of the four cases, I offered the option for the gatekeeper to provide permission for the case to be identified. This is based on Yin's suggestion that it is most desirable to share the

case identities so that readers can recollect background information they may already know about the case (2014). My decision was also influenced by the reality that there are very few Canadian public libraries that incorporate social workers in their operations and they are largely known, or easily found; therefore, case anonymity would not be realistic. In all four cases, permission to state the library names was given. Please refer to Appendix B for an example of the case consent form.

Because the libraries were not anonymous, I took extra steps in the analysis to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the interview participants. I amalgamated the demographic data and the cross-case analysis rather than present this information separately. I also referred to general roles (library staff) rather than specific titles (director). I describe the interviews later in this chapter.

3.5.2 Data collection

In an effort to strengthen this study by combining methods (Patton, 2015) in order to increase the study's internal validity (Crowe et al., 2011), and to adhere to the key principles of data collection in case study (Yin, 2014), the process of data and methodological triangulation in this study incorporated three methods and diverse participants: a) an online survey with quantitative and qualitative questions administered to libraries across Canada to gather knowledge and opinion of social workers in public libraries, and perspectives of the impact of social workers within their libraries; b) semi-structured interviews with the social worker(s) and their librarian manager(s) and other relevant staff at each site; and c) document review. All data and research memos were uploaded, stored, and ultimately coded using nVivo software. Please refer to Table 2 for a summary of data collection methods, procedures and timelines.

Table 2*Summary of Data Collection Methods, Procedures and Timelines*

Data Collection Method	Procedure	Timeline
Online survey	Dissemination via Survey Monkey to Canadian public library listservs	July – September 2017
Individual interviews with library staff, municipal staff, and social workers	Phone interviews	October – December 2017
Documents and artefacts	Available documents and artefacts requested and compiled	October 2017 – February 2018

For both the semi-structured interviews and online survey questions, the main questions were based on the literature review. The academic and grey literature on the topic helped to frame the questions. Because I didn't have enough personal experience and the time constraints on the thesis timeline limited my ability to use preliminary research, this was the best fit (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In ordering the questions, I followed two principles suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012). The first is to ask questions in a sequence that makes clear their connections, for when we illuminate how they are related, it often leads to richer and more detailed responses due to layering of answers – that is, participants may “answer current question and go back to add more info to the last one” (p. 136). The second principle is to make sure that early questions do not limit what the participants say later – “broad, orienting question first and more detailed, specific questions after” (p. 137).

3.5.2.1 Phase 1 – Online Survey

Both quantitative and qualitative information was gathered through this instrument. The quantitative data included Likert-style questions on familiarity with social work practice in general and social work practice specifically at their library; ranking questions on their perspectives about what kind of social work practice (i.e. outreach, advocacy, referral, counselling, etc.) would be best

suited to their context; and demographic questions related to age, gender identity, job title, and number of years worked at the library. The online survey also asked a number of open-ended qualitative questions similar to those posed to the social worker in the semi-structured interviews. The purpose of collecting this quantitative data was to provide contextual and descriptive data of a variety of staff members to help provide more nuance to the case study. In addition, the purpose of the survey was to possibly inform the interview guide and document gathering for Phase 2.

Prior to distributing the online survey, I created and distributed a pilot to a small group of experts in both the public library and social work disciplines. Based on their feedback, I revised the questions and formally distributed the final survey across the country.

3.5.2.2 Phase 2 – Case Study

After securing permission from the gatekeepers at each selected case site, telephone interviews took place involving the social worker(s), their direct librarian managers, and other key library and municipal staff. Prior to engaging in the interviews, I first created and distributed a draft interview guide to a small group of experts in both the public library and social work disciplines. Based on their feedback, I revised the questions. Please refer to Appendix C and Appendix D for the interview guides.

The individual semi-structured telephone interviews followed a pragmatic interviewing protocol that posed “straightforward questions about real-world issues aimed at getting straightforward answers that can yield practical and useful insights, focuses on practical effects of beliefs and actions” (Patton, 2015, p. 436). They occurred at one point in time and consisted of open-ended questions. These types of interviews tend to be short (between 60-90 minutes) and focused. I employed the interview guide approach (Patton, 2015) in which I specified the topics and issues to be covered in advance, in outline form, and I decided the general order and phrasing of questions

in advance. In this way, an outline helped to improve thoroughness of the data and ensure more systematic process; interviews could still be like a conversation, and there was opportunity to pursue various lines of discussion or thought. I used probes to follow up from main questions to help contain the length of responses as well as ensure sufficient degree of detail. They helped to clarify meanings, fill in missing parts, and keep the interview on track (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

However, as each interview progressed, I made revisions and additions to the interview guide. Qualitative data analysis was useful in the early stages of the current study, in line with Miles and Huberman (1994): “We strongly recommend early analysis. It helps the field-worker cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new, often better, data” (p. 50). Therefore, in this study I conducted early, broad analysis of survey results and reflections as each interview, which then enabled revising and adding questions to the guide. This iterative, reflective process continued after each of the interviews.

Some examples of ways that collection and interviewing adapted as a result of this process included adding the following questions for social workers: How did you come to this type of work (what motivated you to work in a public library and what about your background made it a good fit); How do you compare your social work practice in this environment to other environments; What underlying philosophies, theories, approaches are important to your work in libraries (this came from the first round of interview where a theme came up around the significance of trauma-informed practice, harm-reduction approach, and anti-oppressive practice (AOP) as I wanted to see how other cases approached this, and from not only social work perspectives); What is success for you in this work?

With librarians, I also adapted the revised the interview guide as the early reflections and global analysis occurred. These are questions that were not included in the original interview guide,

but were added later: How can library sciences and social work increase interdisciplinary work in the future; Describe the structure and your role; What underlying philosophies, theories, approaches are important to your work in libraries (this came from the first round of interview where a theme came up around the significance of being a community-led library, as I wanted to see how other cases approached this)?

Concurrent in Phase 2 was the document review. For each of the four case libraries, I collected relevant documentation in three ways. First, following each phone interview I sent all of the interview participants an email request for them to share pertinent documents related to their work and the social work initiatives at their libraries. This resulted in the receipt of documents such as internal planning tools, assessments done on pilots, job descriptions, and new stories that staff knew had been published on their social work initiatives. Second, I searched each of the four library websites for the strategic planning documents, annual reports, and communication related to its social worker programs, including links to videos and other promotional materials. Third, I searched the grey literature using search terms specific to these library social work programs to unearth news stories and other related publications. Please refer to Appendix E for a list of all documentation collected. The purpose of collecting this documentation was, through triangulation of data, to provide a fuller picture of each case and to ensure that the themes emerging from the interviews maintained consistency when compared to the documentation.

3.5.3 Data analysis

3.5.3.1 Multicase study analysis

In multicase studies, experienced researchers suggest analyzing data relating to the individual cases first, before attempting to make thematic comparisons or discussions across cases (Stake, 2006; Crowe et al., 2011.). In analysis, the researcher must “undertake to understand both the commonality

and differences across cases in the quintain” (Stake, 2006, p. 40). Stake (2006) also urged that analysis and write-up of multicase study findings must provide multiple illustrations and repetitions of key aspects, which include a process of providing multiple perspectives. As a result of these recommendations, the current study followed the process of individual case analysis, followed by cross-case analysis and incorporation of survey themes.

As mentioned in the methods overview, a helpful starting point is to “play” with the data – “searching for patterns, insights, or concepts that seem promising” (Yin, 2014, p. 135). The researcher should follow repeated cycles involving the original research questions, the data, the researcher’s handling and interpretation of the data that must be defensible, and the ability to state some conclusions (Yin, 2014). Yin also urged that it is essential to follow main principles of data analysis, no matter the specific technique. He stated that the analysis must demonstrate that the investigator has attended to all of the evidence; that the investigator has comprehensively covered the key research questions; and that the analysis tried to include as much evidence as was available, leaving no loose ends. Yin (2014) further recommended that analysis should address all plausible rival interpretations. This current study employed all of the above recommendations except the last one. The reason for not addressing all plausible rival interpretations is the time limitations, large volume of data, and newness of the field (lack of research to show any other interpretations).

Stake (1995) advocated categorical aggregation as one of the analytical approaches in case studies, a process whereby the researcher seeks a collection of instances from the data, searching for the emergence of meanings that are relevant to the issue at hand. Thus, the current study utilized categorical aggregation as one data analysis technique. Moreover, because this is a multicase study, I also followed Yin’s (2009) suggestion for cross-case synthesis as an analytic technique when the

researcher studies two or more cases. He suggested that a word table can be created to display the data from individual cases according to some uniform framework (Creswell, 2013, p. 199), which I created using nVivo. The purpose of this tool, according to Yin (2009) is that it becomes easier for the researcher to explore and compare cases.

3.5.3.2 Mixed methods considerations

A challenge of mixed methods analysis is providing a coherent interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2014; Crowe et al., 2011). This study followed the general recommendations provided by Creswell and Clark's (2011) volume on mixed methods research. In preparing the data for qualitative analysis, I used the computer program nVivo. I wrote memos and developed a codebook. Analysis of qualitative data consisted of coding, assigning labels to codes, and then grouping the codes into themes followed by interrelating themes into smaller sets. I represented the findings using visual models and then assessed how the research questions were answered. I used basic descriptive statistical analysis to analyze the embedded quantitative data within the survey. Tables and figures depicted quantitative data related to participant demographics, urban centre populations, numbers of library branches, and budgets.

Another key recommendation is to repeatedly review and sort "the voluminous and detail-rich data" (Crowe et al., 2011, p. 2). Inductive analysis and creative synthesis calls for immersion in the details first in order to find the patterns, themes, relationships; exploration and attention to what emerges is followed by confirmatory inquiry; and then creative synthesis (Patton, 2015). Specific techniques I used to aid in the data analysis process includes starting analysis during all phases by recording emergent patterns and possible themes in an analysis journal (Patton, 2015). I kept notes in a journal and on the interview transcripts that included reflections about interactions and decision points, and how these influenced the development of the case study (Hyett et al., 2014).

3.5.3.3 Coding

I uploaded and analyzed all interview transcripts, documentation (including transcripts of some relevant videos on library websites), and memos using nVivo. I followed the definition of codes as “tags and labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during the study. Codes are usually attached to ‘chunks’ of varying size – words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56).

Adding to this basic definition, the current study’s coding techniques relied upon the guidance found in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Saldana, 2013). Saldana similarly described codes in qualitative studies as consisting of a word or short phrase that “symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 4). In first cycle coding, I coded in larger chunks of paragraphs. Even though Charmaz (2008) advised that detailed line-by-line coding can encourage a more trustworthy analysis by reducing bias and insertion of researcher fears and assumptions, I chose to work with larger chunks of meaning because of the sheer volume of data. However, in second cycle coding processes, I further separated and reconfigured many of the codes as the themes and patterns began developing. Saldana referenced Charmaz (2001), who described coding as the “critical link between data collection and their explanation of meaning ... and the bones of analysis” (p 4) – this is a description that I used to focus my understanding of the essential purpose and process.

In the first round of coding, I utilized attribute coding to log essential information about the case characteristics (locations, roles) as a way to document the descriptive information (p. 85). In this first round of coding, I used structural coding (also known as utilitarian coding) as well in order to connect the transcript and document data with the interview guide questions and

categories. According to Saldana, this is “particularly appropriate for qualitative studies employing multiple participants, standardized or semi-structured data-gathering protocols, or exploratory investigations to gather topic lists or indexes of major categories or themes” (p. 98), which accurately describes the current study. By using structural coding as a first process, I was able to identify of large segments of text on broad topics, which formed basis for more in-depth analysis.

From there, as I moved into second cycle coding I began to apply concept codes, which are short words or phrases that symbolically represent a larger meaning and allows the researcher to reflect on “broader social constructs” (p. 120). This is often done with simultaneous coding in which there are overlapping codes, appropriate when the content suggests multiple meanings in complex social interactions – also true for the current study. The last step of my coding process involved pattern coding in which I examined initial codes and identified trends, patterns and relationships. Pattern codes “are explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration or explanation – meta code – appropriate for condensing large amount of data into smaller number of analytic units; major themes; search for rules, causes, explanation; social networks and patterns” (p. 236). These lay the groundwork for cross-case analysis.

3.6 Validation

There are varying perspectives on validation in qualitative research; Creswell (2013) asserted that validation is an effort to assess the accuracy of a study’s findings, and prefers the term to historical ones such as trustworthiness or authenticity. Because the term validation is more commonly used in case study research (Creswell, 2013), this is the term I employ here. Creswell also suggested using multiple validation strategies, and the ones that I used in the current study are:

prolonged engagement and persistent observation; peer review or debriefing; clarifying researcher bias; rich, thick description strategies; and member checking.

3.6.1 Prolonged engagement and persistent observation

There are specific recommended strategies related to “safeguards against tunnel vision, bias, and self-delusion” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 56) that can be applied to case study research. One safeguard is to try and sample more widely, which would result in prolonged engagement. As the research project evolved, initially I could only get one case and four interviews. My supervisor suggested expanding this and even though I initially viewed this as a setback, upon reflection, I concurred that this would strengthen the study and help provide stronger data. I sent out invitations again, both within the one case and to other libraries – resulted in larger sample, greater variety of cases and greater variety of people (perspectives from CEO’s to librarians, to library assistants, to social workers, to municipal director associated with the pilot). This is also referred to as extending the universe of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Another part of this validation strategy includes triangulation in which researchers make use of different and multiple sources, methods, theories and investigators (Creswell, 2013). For triangulation, I had multiple data sources that enabled me to look at a number of sites; types of roles interviewed; types of documentation collected and analyzed. I also employed triangulation of method (interviews, document analysis, and online survey).

3.6.2 Peer review or debriefing

This validation strategy helps to provide external checks for the research process. I used a number of additional protective steps in my study process to help avoid missteps and to keep me honest. In Phase 1, I piloted the survey by sending it to approximately five key contacts from both the social work and library sciences fields. I asked them to complete the survey and provide me with

their feedback. Prior to disseminating the survey to the larger participant group, I incorporated the necessary relevant revisions.

I followed a similar protocol for my interview guide by first piloting it with at least two colleagues (again, representing each discipline) and using appropriate feedback to revise the guide as needed prior to conducting my interviews. Next, after I completed each semi-structured interview, I wrote memos prior to moving through the rest of the interviews. I completed the transcription process in sequence after the interviews were finished, and continued to engage in iterative analysis.

I also utilized a fellow MSW thesis student as a peer reviewer. We engaged in weekly discussions and shared opportunities to be each other's 'devil's advocates'.

3.6.3 Clarifying researcher bias

In the introductory chapter to this thesis, there are sections on locating myself as a researcher and identifying researcher motivations. There is also a section on reflexivity. Moreover, I worked to avoid biases stemming from researcher effects on the site (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 266).

Distance could be viewed as an advantage in this situation; on the phone, as I could be considered less obtrusive. I attempted to make sure my intentions were clear – email communication for survey interest, case consent, individual interview consent, and follow-up request for documentation all contained description of the study, its purpose, method of data collection, confidentiality, and supervisor contact information.

3.6.4 Rich, thick description

This validation strategy enables readers to make more informed decisions regarding the study's transferability. This is also supported by case study guru Yin (2014), who advised that "throughout, a persistent challenge is to produce high-quality analyses, which require attending to *all* the evidence collected, displaying and presenting the evidence apart from any

interpretation, and considering alternative interpretations” (p. 132). By utilizing nVivo and uploading all transcripts and documentation into the system, I was able to include all material in my coding strategies, thus ensuring that it was part of a comprehensive analysis in which all of the triangulated information was analyzed together. Moreover, in order to ensure credibility, the researcher must be transparent in the coding process (Saldana, 2013), which I have done extensively in the previous section. All of the detailed and transparent analysis led to thick, rich descriptions that are ultimately communicated in the findings.

3.6.5 Member checking

Member checking refers to asking the interviewees if they would like to review transcripts or read drafts of reports to provide feedback on whether there has been misinterpretation (Stake, 2006). This is advocated as an important validation procedure by Yin (2014), who asserted that having the draft report reviewed, not just by peer, but also by the informants and participants in the case “is a way of corroborating the essential findings and evidence presented – [and] increases construct validity of study” (p. 200). Because of the large amount of data I collected and the multicase design involving 17 members, I opted to provide a high-level summary of the main themes via email. I invited each interview participant to respond within a week with their reflections and any additional perspectives. I also informed the participants that they were welcome to read the full findings chapter if they desired. Four participants replied by email to state that they agreed with the themes.

3.7 Ethics

This University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board approved this study. As this study involved human participants, it was critical to be aware of the risks and benefits to participants, as set out in the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculty Research Ethics Board. In the design, collection, and analysis phase, I paid close attention to ethical considerations related to

confidentiality, anonymity, and secure data storage. For the online survey, participants were provided with an informed consent page at the outset. Prior to engaging with any interviews or accessing any documents, I obtained case consent from each of the participating libraries. Once that was obtained, I provided an overview of the study, communicated that participation was voluntary, and attached the consent form to each email inviting participants to take part in the interviews. All consent forms are attached in the appendices.

Anonymity and confidentiality were upheld throughout the study in a number of ways. First, I did all of the transcriptions myself and removed identifying information as I transcribed and then coded. Electronic data stored on my personal computer was password-protected. All hard copies, including transcripts and journals, were kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. All hard copies were shredded once analysis was complete. Electronic data will be kept on a USB, stored in the locked personal filing cabinet, for no longer than five years, after which point it will be erased.

There were minimal potential risks of harm to the participants or the researcher in this study. For the online survey, implied consent was in the form of a "yes/no" question before the survey began. A complete description of the research study, including risks, benefits, and contact information was provided on the first page. For the semi-structured interviews, informed consent was obtained via a signed consent form.

3.8 Limitations

The many differences between published case studies often create challenges for researchers to adequately define and understand case study as a methodology (Hyett et al., 2014). Case study research has received criticism for its lack of scientific rigour, inability to provide generalizability, and collecting overwhelmingly large amounts of data (Crowe et al., 2011). These limitations can

partially be addressed by member checking, detailed transparency of the research process through a research journal, and triangulation of data and methods.

A key case study pillar is the exploration of a phenomenon in its natural context (Crowe et al., 2011). Therefore, a significant limitation of this study is that although Stake (1995; 2006) advocated for the importance of researcher observation and personal involvement in the context and location of each case, this was not feasible given the large geographic region and limited resources as a graduate student. I was not able to be on site to observe and interact with the case members in their own contexts. In case study methodology, a common perspective is that naturally occurring narratives are desired (Stake 2006). I addressed this limitation by collecting as many visually descriptive and varied documents as possible, as well as ensuring a focus on context-specific illustrations during the interviews.

Finally, a limitation of mixed methods studies is that they generally require a team of researchers who can provide expertise in both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Bryman, 2007). Because I am an individual MSW thesis student with a tight timeline and even tighter budget, my methodological preference and comfort in qualitative design significantly impacted this project. It was mainly a qualitative study with only very minor elements of quantitative data, which may limit the scope of its application in real-life settings where decision makers may require summative evaluations focusing on quantitative data for their business cases.

CHAPTER 4: Results – Survey

4.1 Survey introduction

I distributed an online survey to public library staff across Canada between July-August 2017 with the purpose of ascertaining general perspectives and experiences with library social work in Canada. In this section, I provide an overview of participant demographic data, followed by survey findings related to the research questions on motivations for Canadian to hire social workers and the nature of social work practice within these libraries.

4.2 Demographic data

A total of 78 respondents began the survey. After the first question, which asked whether participants were currently employed within a Canadian public library, 58 respondents continued on and 44 respondents completed the entire survey. Because only the two questions were mandatory, not all respondents completed every question. I included data in the analysis for respondents who partially completed the survey. As a result, the number of responses for questions range between 42 and 78. In the analysis following this section, I provide both numbers of respondent and percentages for the relevant questions.

Public library staff from all Canadian provinces and territories except British Columbia, the Yukon Territory, and Nunavut responded to the survey. Figure 1 depicts the respondents by region. Of the total respondents for this question ($n = 42$), half were from the Atlantic Region (Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick). Approximately a quarter of the respondents were from the Prairie Provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta) and a quarter from Central Canada (Quebec, Ontario). There was one respondent from the North (Northwest Territories), and no respondents from the West Coast (British Columbia).

Figure 1. Respondents by Region

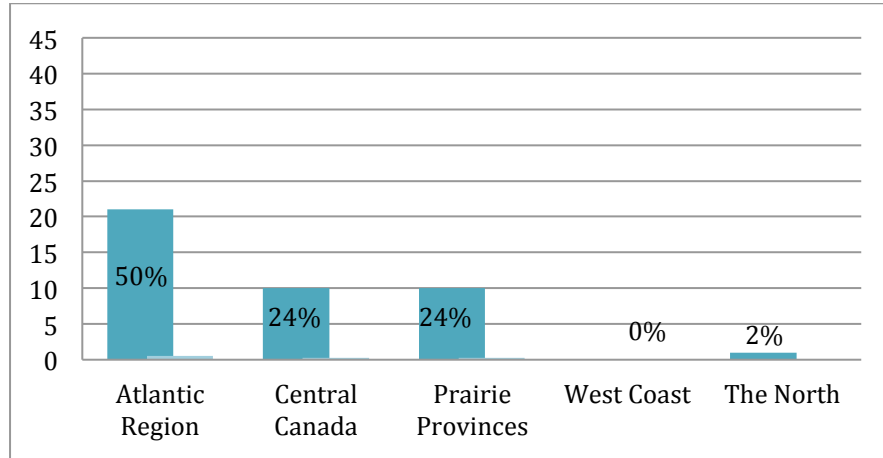


Table 3 represents the breakdown of respondents by municipality size. The majority of respondents (67%) work in public libraries located in large, medium, or small urban centres. About a third (33%) of respondents work in libraries located in towns, villages, and municipal districts consisting of rural area of farmlands, hamlets, and rural residential subdivisions. There were no respondents from First Nations Reserves or Metis Settlements.

Table 3

Respondents by Size of Municipality

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Métis Settlement or First Nations Reserve	0.00%	0
Municipal District (M.D. or county; rural area of farmlands, hamlets, and rural residential subdivisions)	14.29%	6
Village (population of at least 300 people)	2.38%	1
Town (population between 1,000 and 10,000 people)	16.67%	7
City - small (population between 10,000 and 29,999 people)	14.29%	6
City - medium (population between 30,000 and 99,999 people)	23.81%	10
City - large (population of 100,000 people or more)	28.57%	12
TOTAL		42

Table 4 refers to the primary roles of respondents. Of the primary roles of respondents, and the survey allowed them to check more than one, by far the largest group consisted of managers (42%) and almost half of respondents stated that they are librarians (47%). Other respondents described their roles as outreach librarians, communications staff, library technicians, directors, executive directors or CEOs, reference assistants, and human resources. No library social workers participated in this online survey. Some respondents ($n = 10$) also provided role titles not listed in the options, which included bookmobile and offsite services, library assistant, project developer, children's and youth services, head librarian, administrator, and two respondents who stated that in smaller libraries they perform many different roles.

Table 4

Primary Roles of Respondents

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Manager	41.86%	18
Librarian (Master of Library and Information Science)	46.51%	20
Reference Assistant	6.98%	3
Human Resources	2.33%	1
Library Technician	9.30%	4
Communications	16.28%	7
Social Worker	0.00%	0
Director	9.30%	4
Outreach	18.60%	8
Service Delivery	13.95%	6
Executive Director or CEO	6.98%	3
Other (please specify)	23.26%	10
Total Respondents: 43		

Respondents were asked to identify whether or not they work in a library that currently employs at least one social worker. Table 5 illustrates the responses to this question. The first group, approximately 11% of the respondents, consists of those who work in libraries that employ at least one social worker ($n = 6$). In the subsequent analysis section, this is referred to as Group 1. These respondents reported that they work in libraries with between one and three social workers. The next group is comprised of those who work in libraries where there are plans to hire social workers, which is about 9% of the respondents ($n = 5$). This group is referred to as Group 2 in the analysis that follows. The majority of respondents, about 80%, work in libraries that do not currently employ a social worker, have not in the past, and have no plans to do so ($n = 45$). This is referred to as Group 3 in the analysis.

Table 5

Responses to question on whether public library employs a social worker

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
The library where I work currently employs at least one social worker.	10.71%	6
The library where I work does not currently employ any social workers, but plans to.	8.93%	5
The library where I work does not currently employ any social workers, but has in the past.	0.00%	0
The library where I work does not currently employ any social workers, has not in the past, and has no plans to.	80.36%	45
TOTAL		56

4.3 Key findings

In this section, I provide an overview of the main survey findings grouped in the following thematic areas: library motivation to incorporate social workers; primary social worker duties; benefits and challenges of library social work; and opinion on the addition of social workers to Canadian public libraries.

4.3.1 Library motivation to incorporate social workers

The survey findings for library motivation to incorporate social workers are organized into the following thematic areas: desire to better serve and connect with vulnerable library users; aim to create partnerships with community agencies; and the need to fill gap in community services.

4.3.1.1 Desire to better serve and connect with vulnerable library users

The respondents ($n = 6$) who work in public libraries that currently employ at least one social worker (Group 1) were asked to describe the conditions in their community that led to the decision to create the social work positions within their libraries. The significant theme across all responses is that the social worker was hired to help the library respond to the numbers of people facing homelessness or other vulnerabilities such as mental health challenges who were coming to the library. This is illustrated by the following respondent's comment: *"Many vulnerable people spending great lengths of time at the library, some disconnected from the library, wanting to connect more with these people and work with them"*.

Similarly, the respondents ($n = 5$) who work in public libraries that plan to employ at least one social worker (Group 2) were also asked to describe the conditions in their community that led to the decision to create the social work positions within their libraries. As with the previous group, the significant theme across responses focused on assisting clients facing homelessness or insecure housing, as well as mental health challenges and addictions. One respondent succinctly described the motivation as deriving from their city's *"high homeless rate, high addictions rate"*, while another respondent described the need arising from *"poverty issues in the library"*.

The respondents ($n = 45$) who work in public libraries that do not have social workers on staff, nor have plans to employ any in the foreseeable future (Group 3) were also asked to describe

the conditions in their community that might lead to the decision to create the social work positions within their libraries. As with the previous two groups, the theme of staff requiring assistance in meeting the needs of vulnerable patrons was at the top. One respondent wrote, *“Patrons experiencing mental health issues sometimes behave in a disruptive way, causing conflict with other patrons or library staff. It can be difficult to manage this behaviour”*.

A significant category from Group 3 related to serving vulnerable library users, mentioned 12 times. Responses that specified those experiencing homelessness and those living in precarious housing situations occurred seven times. This was closely followed by descriptions of trying to serve the needs of those living in poverty and low income situations, which was mentioned five times. Respondents pointed to an increase in homelessness and one person observed that *“the library is a popular and safe space for members of the homeless community”*.

Another significant library user population mentioned by Group 3 was the category of vulnerability and complex needs related to mental health, which appeared 12 times. One of the respondents stated that in a rural regional system, public libraries are one of the few public spaces where people can gather safely and that many clients facing mental health challenges use the library frequently. Another respondent pointed to increased suicidal incidents. Respondents also discussed dealing with patrons facing addictions. One respondent named staff safety as a factor.

A third category pertaining to vulnerable or marginalized library users noted by Group 3 respondents is an increased number of newcomers. Respondents observed that large community of immigrant families and children created adult education, literacy, and other related needs that could be supported by a social worker.

Other observations related to the need to support library users noted by Group 3 included more general comments about those facing isolation and barriers to service. Examples provided by respondents include rural isolation, lack of transportation, lack of access to community resources; and outreach to underserved demographics.

4.3.1.2 Creation of partnerships with community agencies

Within Group 3, respondents shared the perspective that collaborating or partnering with an outside community organization could create the conditions in which a social worker would be based out of the library. One respondent put it directly, *“only a partnership with [community agency] would bring in social workers”*. Another stated that partnering with an organization to have someone work in an office from within the library is how they could envision having a social worker on staff: *“That way we do not have to hire someone on our staff, rather, we partner with an existing organization that already has skilled staff and a presence in our community”*.

4.3.1.3 Need to fill gap in community services

Group 3 respondents frequently stated that a condition that could lead to the creation of a social work position on staff is if other community services were removed and the library had to fill the gap. One respondent indicated that *“if community-based social work or health teams were cancelled, then the library might need to invest in a social work position”*. Another stated that if there were no government offices nearby, then there may be a need. If the library were seeing more at-risk library users, if social problems became a social crisis or if there were cutbacks to social services in the community, then a social worker on staff may be considered.

4.3.2 Primary social work duties

Respondents were also asked about the primary duties of the social workers within their libraries, and were able to select all options that applied to their libraries. Group 1, respondents

who work in libraries that currently employ social workers, reported that the primary duties of the social workers are outreach (80%), community development and engagement (60%), resource and supports referral (40%), counselling (40%), and advocacy (20%), with none of the respondents naming policy and research as a role for the social workers. In the open-ended section, Group 1 respondents also reported that social workers assist staff response to challenging behaviours, identify trouble areas and patterns, and develop solutions in tandem with management and security.

Group 2's responses differed slightly from those whose libraries already hire social workers. In this group of respondents who work in libraries that plan to employ a social worker, the planned social work duties include resource and support referral (75%) and community development and engagement (75%), as opposed to the previous group which named outreach as the key role. Group 2 reported outreach (50%) and counselling (50%) next. As with the first group, advocacy (25%) and policy and research (25%) were listed as the least common duties for the social workers. In the open-ended section, similar to the first group, Group 2 respondents reported that the future social workers will provide staff development and professional support opportunities. One respondent stated that the social workers would do "*whatever the community most needed*".

In addition to what already exists and what is planned, all respondents were asked what kind of social work duties they believed would be most beneficial within their libraries. Figure 2 illustrates opinions by group. All three groups expressed similar opinions, favouring social work duties in the areas of resource and supports first, followed by outreach, counselling, and community development. Advocacy and policy and research were viewed as least beneficial social work duties for all groups.

Figure 2. What kind of social work duties would be most beneficial in your library?



4.3.3 Benefits of library social work

When asked about the benefits of having social workers on staff within their public libraries, the theme that arose most frequently within Group 1 is the support social workers can provide to library staff through training and assistance. One respondent wrote that the social workers “*help to change staff attitudes and perceptions to improve outcomes. Develop trust and rapport with those with challenging behaviours due to factors like mental health or addictions*”. Social workers provide support to staff who are dealing with clients facing distressing or traumatic situations within the library.

One respondent highlighted that the social work program in the library has received positive press and has a high community profile; the social worker in this library “*works with clients that other agencies no longer are able to support*”, along with “*developing collaborations with other agencies*”. Respondents also indicated the social workers are able to advocate for both staff and clients with special needs.

When asked about the benefits of having social workers on staff within their public libraries, a similar theme arose most frequently for Group 2: support to library staff as a whole

through training and assistance. This is illustrated by one respondent, who noted, “*someone who is comfortable approaching disadvantaged patrons and offering assistance*”, and another who wrote “*more resources for public, more staff training*”. Unlike the previous group, one respondent in this section articulated that one of the planned roles for the social worker at their library was greater community development, and building up morale as well as a stronger ability to understand and help people.

When asked what the benefits of having a social worker within their public library, several key themes emerged within Group 3 respondents. Different from the first two groups, the first theme encompasses benefits for current library users and was mentioned 20 times. It could be more fully articulated as an increase to timely, accessible assistance and resource referrals within a safe environment for people in need and for the community as a whole. Within this overarching theme, respondents noted that having access to a social worker within the library is about meeting the “*client where they are in the community*” – people are already library users and some frequently spend a lot of time in the libraries. One respondent observed that “*as our libraries seem to be increasingly becoming ‘one stop shops’, it would make sense to have that aspect for those who have fallen between the cracks*”. The library is perceived as a safe space that is not stigmatized: “*clients would be comfortable there and could not be identified as waiting for social services*”. Another respondent stated that “*people would have another great resource based in a place that is highly accessible*”. The specific mention of resource provision occurred five times, and respondents discussed how a social worker on staff could provide assistance to members of the community who may need awareness of and access to resources.

Within this theme, Group 3 respondents also noted that having a social worker offer services from within public libraries could increase timely response and provide “*more*

immediate access to services for clients in crisis". Respondents specifically named the following populations as benefitting from a library-based social worker: homeless people who are regular library users; people who are having mental health issues; people looking for work; new residents to Canada; people facing situations of domestic abuse; and intervention in suspected cases of abuse or neglect.

Three of the respondents noted that in addition to providing services for at-risk groups, a social worker within their public libraries would also provide better service for the community as a whole and could "*serve all public better*". As one respondent pointed out about their specific context, "*Because there is no social worker in our community at the moment it would be beneficial to the whole community*". Along this same vein of benefits to the overall area, one person wrote, "*I think this would greatly benefit the people of our region; I wish the town and the library could work together to create this position*".

The second major theme within Group 3 on benefits, mentioned 14 times, echoed the first two groups and encompassed benefits for library staff. It could be further articulated as the addition of a needed skillset not currently found within public libraries that can provide staff support and training. Librarian and other library staff professional training falls short when it comes to helping patrons living in complex situations. As one respondent put it, "*as librarians, we try to help everyone, but some situations are beyond our training*". Another wrote that "*social workers are trained to deal with types of situations that librarians are not*".

Responses in this theme fall into two general categories. The first category is around the benefits of having a social worker provide direct support to staff by helping them work with clients and certain challenging or crisis situations. Respondents specified that it would be helpful to have someone on staff that could be called in or to home library users could be referred,

specifically to assist with advice regarding community services such as shelters, food banks, addictions services, mental health supports, assisting those in poverty, children at risk, and as one respondent put it “*heavy cases*”. One respondent stated that library staff “*do not have the power to refer people to the proper support networks*”, and along a similar vein another stated that “*often library staff are aware that library users face challenges but are not aware of who to direct those users for help*”. The perceived benefit is that a social worker could “*help to de-escalate situations*”. Indeed, this respondent noted that there already exists awareness and support for this kind of assistance among library staff: “*Understanding of how the program would be beneficial, current library staff recognize that we have a unique ability to reach people who could benefit from social worker assistance*”.

The second category related to advantages for library staff is around the benefits of having a social worker provide specific professional development and training to library employees. One respondent specified that education around mental health would be beneficial. Another discussed how a benefit of having a social worker on staff was that this person could help with “*modelling behaviour and engagement practices for staff*”.

A third theme that arose from Group 3 survey responses about benefits of having a social worker employed within public libraries, mentioned four times, is the creation of a shift in culture that reduces barriers and increases access. One respondent described this as “*a social workers’ perspective may alert us to unintentional barriers to service*”. The issue that a social worker on staff could help to address was described by another respondent in the following way: “*Libraries are natural draws to people with mental health issues and homelessness. What we can offer these individuals is limited and when they are in crisis we often have no way to help them and are forced to restrict their access to our building, programs and services*”. Rather than

restrict access and limit service, respondents observed that a social worker on staff could help patrons who would traditionally be asked to leave or be banned to continue using the library. This could, as yet another respondent noted, *“shift the culture of the library to one where people who are already using the library can feel more comfortable doing so because they know their needs can be met and that they will be welcomed”*.

A fourth theme that emerged as a potential benefit of employing social workers within public library systems is increased engagement for non-library users, mentioned four times. This theme could be described as a means to encourage more people, especially those who are vulnerable or marginalized, to use the library and be exposed to unique library values and perspectives. A social worker on staff could, as one respondent pointed out, *“provide outreach to families living in poverty to engage them in using free services the library offers”*. Another respondent wrote about how social workers could potentially provide strong partnerships to engage community members.

4.3.4 Challenges of library social work

When asked about the challenges of having social workers on staff within their public libraries, the respondents from Group 1, those who currently work in libraries with social workers, provided four key areas of difficulty. One is around availability, as the social workers are attempting to accomplish a great deal with limited resources. A second difficulty is that it can be difficult to justify at the municipal level. A third challenge is that there are inappropriate referrals given from other agencies in the community or from internal library staff. Fourth is the perception among some staff and clients that having social workers on staff attracts *“those people”* and that the library becomes *“a less safe place”*.

When asked about the challenges of having social workers on staff within their public libraries, Group 2 respondents, those who work in libraries that plan to incorporate social workers, provided three key areas of difficulty. One that came up the most frequently was the cost and lack of funding for the position, which is that it can be difficult to justify at the municipal level. A second possible challenge is that library staff will become too dependent on the social workers, especially when dealing with more challenging situations involving patrons. A third respondent wrote, “*privacy, intrusiveness*”.

When asked about the challenges of having social workers on staff within their public libraries, for Group 3 respondents – those who work in libraries that do not have social workers and do not currently have plans to incorporate them - by far the most common area cited is lack of funding, mentioned 18 times. While most respondents simply wrote concise phrases such as “*budget constraints*”, “*extreme lack of funding*”, and “*no money*”, this theme can be sub-divided into categories that further explain issues around financial resources. The first is the convincing funders at federal, provincial, municipal, and organizational levels, who often do not recognize the extent of the issues. One person described how their library was unsuccessful in obtaining funding through a federal homelessness program. A respondent stated that it is “*a provincial responsibility*”, and another wrote, “*My library is inside the city structure so we have to convince even more of the advantages of having a social worker within our libraries*”. One respondent stated that they had tried to get funding through a local Housing First initiative, but was unsuccessful. The difficulty in persuading funders is connected to the general lack of awareness, as articulated by this respondent: “*The awareness of how much homeless people use public libraries and how libraries need support to help them does not seem to be recognized*”.

Internally, in a unionized environment, a respondent noted that it can be challenging to create the position as part of the bargaining unit.

Lack of funding was also discussed in terms of continuity. One respondent is concerned about having the funding to hire a social worker for a period of time, and then “*having the funding dry up*”. Because this kind of position would take time to introduce, stated this respondent, “*it would be important that it be funded into the future*”. Another respondent remarked that the challenge rests at the provincial level, as the province “*often does not want to do a long term project*”.

Funding related to small communities with few resources was also brought up. A respondent from a small community stated that their small library is privately funded, so it is challenging to find sufficient funds. One respondent also wondered if public libraries receiving funding for social workers would result in funding for social workers elsewhere in the community being negatively impacted.

A second theme is challenges within library staff and operations, mentioned 13 times. One of these challenges centres on privacy and confidentiality concerns, with four respondents stating that their libraries did not have sufficient private office space or private meeting areas. Another potential challenge related to the roles of social workers and librarians. One respondent put it like this: “*Librarians and social workers have been typically known to do very different work. As libraries change, social work is closer to what work librarians do. Some librarians may be territorial over their work*”. Another respondent described this as “*overlapping duties*”.

Another possible challenge around staffing and operations was scheduling, which one respondent noted could pose a challenge as there could be little demand for social workers’ services during some periods, and too much demand during others. Locating a suitable social

worker could pose a problem (“*Will availability match needs?*”), as could ensuring that the social worker remains on staff for a sufficient period of time (“*Social workers in this province do not tend to stay in one position for long*”). Staff training also came up as a potential issue, with a respondent observing that there may be difficulty providing training to help handle clients who are in crisis.

Perception came up as an area of challenge with staff and operations. One respondent simply put it as “*staff perception*”. Another expressed a concern about the perceived risk of increased conflict within the library that would be disruptive to other patrons. Finally, a different respondent wrote about perceptions of what social workers do, and “*that to have one, you might have ‘a problem’*”.

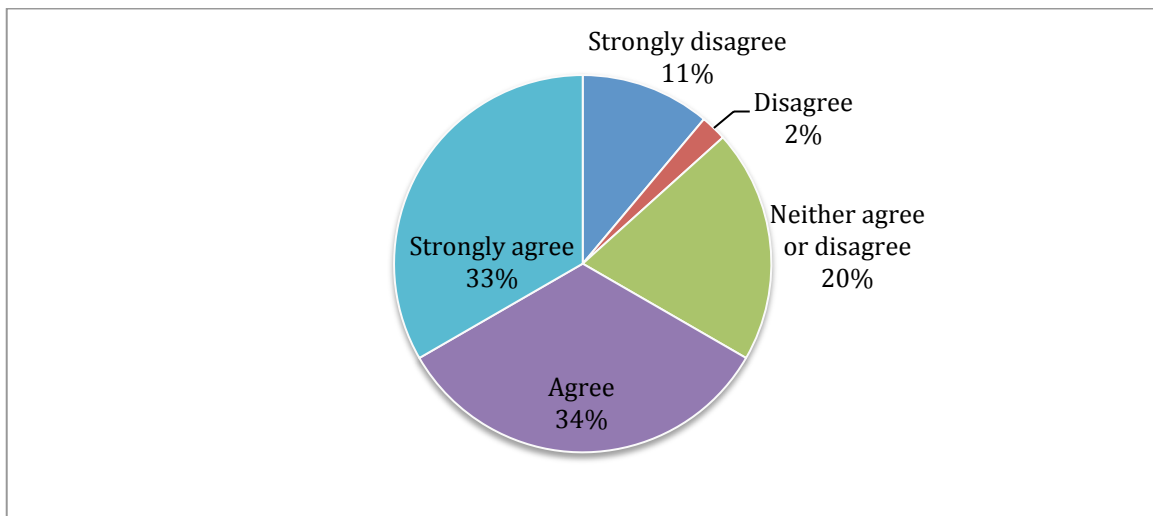
A last comment in this thematic area pertains to the size of the community and the capacity for this kind of endeavour: “*Community is too small for a social work position at the library*”

The final thematic area for challenges is concisely described by respondents as none. This was mentioned three times by three different respondents, one of whom wrote “*None. I think there are only positives*”. A fourth respondent expressed the less emphatic “*not sure*”.

4.3.5 Social work contributions to public libraries

Figure 3 illustrates a breakdown of opinions provided by respondents when asked how much they agreed with the statement that social workers could make significant contributions to the work of Canadian public libraries. The participants that responded to the question ($n = 45$) predominantly strongly agreed or agreed (67%). Those who strongly disagreed or disagreed were in the minority (13%), and the remainder (20%) neither agreed or disagreed with the statement.

Figure 3. Do You Think Social Workers Could Make Significant Contributions to the Work of Canadian Public Libraries?



4.4 Summary

The survey findings indicate that Canadian public libraries are motivated to hire or incorporate public libraries due to a desire to better serve and connect vulnerable library users, and to support library staff through assistance and trainings. Libraries are also motivated to seek out community partnerships to bring in social workers. Public libraries would be motivated to engage social workers within their operations if there is a need in the community resulting from removal of existing community services and if social problems reached a critical level.

The survey findings also suggest that the desired primary duties of social workers within Canadian public libraries are mainly provision of resource and supports first, followed by outreach, counselling, and community development. Social workers already working within libraries also provide support to library staff in assisting with challenging behaviours and work with security to develop solutions in dealing with crisis situations. Advocacy, policy and research are the least common aspects of existing or desired library social work practice, according to those surveyed.

The most commonly mentioned perceived benefits of library social workers are in supporting library staff to more effectively work with library users with complex needs. Social workers are perceived as possessing a much-needed skillset that librarians and other library staff do not have, especially when it comes to de-escalating crisis situations, referrals and supports for vulnerable library users, and influencing the culture of inclusion at the library through identification of barriers and increase engagement with traditionally excluded individuals. In addition, library-based social workers are perceived to benefit library users, including those who have fallen through the cracks and whom other agencies are not longer able to support. Providing social work services within a library benefits library users who are already there, opening up access in a de-stigmatizing environment. Library-based social work is also perceived to enable greater collaboration and partnership opportunities between libraries and community agencies. Having library social workers can produce positive media and public perception.

Challenges reported in the survey include social work capacity to engage in difficult work with limited resources, accessing funding, relationships between library staff and social workers, space and scheduling, inappropriate referrals, recruitment of suitable social work staff, and negative fear-based perceptions.

Although just over 10% of respondents strongly disagree and 20% have no clear preference, at 67%, the majority of respondents believe or strongly believe that having social workers on board can make significant contributions to Canadian public libraries.

CHAPTER 5: Results – Cross-Case Analysis

The findings presented in this chapter reflect the key themes that emerged from the case analysis of the four sites. This consisted of individual semi-structured interviews with 17 library staff members, along with relevant documentation from each site. Please refer to Appendix E for documentation sources for each site. Figure 4 illustrates a word cloud generated by all of the transcripts and documentation uploaded into nVivo.

Figure 4. Most Common Words in Data



The demographic table for the interview participants, Table 6, directly follows this introduction. Semi-structured interview participants participated across all four cases and representing a variety of social work, library, and municipal staff positions. All themes that are found in this chapter were common across all four cases, and a variety of illustrations from the cases will be provided throughout. Where appropriate, there is also a discussion of places where

there were differences within the theme among the cases. All quotes in the analysis section come from the interviews and documentation.

Table 6

Breakdown of Semi-Structured Interview Participants by Case and Role

Libraries	# of Participants	Participant roles across cases (combined)
Thunder Bay Public Library (TBPL)	2	Social Workers (6)
Kitchener Public Library (KPL)	2	Library Assistant (1) Community Outreach Librarians (2) Managers (Librarians) (4)
Mississauga Public Library (MPL)	4	Director (Librarian) (2) CEO (Librarian) (1)
Edmonton Public Library (EPL)	9	Municipal Manager (1)
Total	17	

In this chapter, I first present an introduction to the participating libraries and overview of the models of library social work. Following this is the cross-case analysis of significant themes that resonate across all four libraries involved in the study.

5.1 Individual case overview

In this section, I provide an overview of the four individual cases. Refer to Table 7 for an overview of the four models of library social work practice emerging from the individual case analysis: library community agency partnership; library university partnership; library municipal partnership; full-time social workers.

Table 7*Overview of Library Social Work Models from the Four Cases*

Library Description	Library Social Work Model
Thunder Bay Public Library	Library Community Agency Partnership Model
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in Thunder Bay, Ontario • Approximate population 100,000 • Approximate operating budget \$6,200,000.00 • 4 branches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model: The social worker is employed as a housing services coordinator by Alpha Court, a local community agency that provides subsidized housing and case management services to individuals with a serious mental illness and/or drug/alcohol addiction. Through an agreement with TBL, the social worker spends part of each week at the library. • Title: Social Worker • Availability: By appointment or drop-in at the Brodie Resource Library once a week, and at the Waverly Resource Library one afternoon a month
Kitchener Public Library	Library University Partnership Model
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in Kitchener, Ontario • Approximate population 200,000 • Approximate operating budget \$12,000,000.00 • 5 branches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model: Master of Social Work student practicum. Field placement is located at the Central Library in downtown Kitchener. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site supervisor: Librarian at Central Branch • Off-site supervisor: Social worker with an MSW • University field instructor: Wilfrid Laurier University • Title: Community Placement Worker • Availability: 8-month term Sept to April, 3 days per week (546 hours)
Mississauga Public Library	Library Municipal Partnership Model
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in Mississauga, Ontario • Approximate population 720,000 • Approximate operating budget \$27,000,000.00 • 18 branches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model: Innovative Solutions to Homelessness Pilot; Funded by a federal Employment and Social Development Canada grant of \$122,523. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project partners include: City of Mississauga Library, City of Mississauga Recreation, City of Mississauga Corporate Security, City of Mississauga Planning & Building Department (Affordable Housing Strategy), Canadian Mental Health Association (Peel Outreach Team), Region of Peel Human Services (Housing and Homeless Strategy), University of Toronto (Graduate student) • Title: Homeless Prevention Outreach Worker • Availability: Project timeline: May 5, 2017 to July 31, 2018. Mainly situated out of the Central Library, but travels to all 18 branches; full-time.
Edmonton Public Library	Full-time Library Social Worker Model
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in Edmonton, Alberta • Approximate population 900,000 • Approximate operating budget \$60,000,000.00 • 22 branches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model: Emerged out of a 3-year \$605,000 pilot project funded by the Province of Alberta's Safe Communities Innovation Fund. Grown to 3 full-time registered social workers employed by EPL. Based on Community-led Service Model. Partnerships with Bissell Centre and Homeward Trust to support housing homeless individuals. • Title: Community Outreach Services - Outreach Workers • Availability: Operate out of 4 branches, collaborate with library staff

5.1.1 Case #1 Introduction: Thunder Bay Public Library (TBPL)

Thunder Bay Public Library (TBPL) is a system of four branches located in the municipality of Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. Thunder Bay is a city on the north shore of Lake Superior and has a population of just over 100,000. According to the City of Thunder Bay website's City Profile (2018), it is the largest community on Lake Superior and is the most populous municipality in Northwestern Ontario. Compared to other cities across North America, it is the sixth most culturally diverse community of its size. One of the interview participants noted that compared to the other cases in this study, *"Thunder Bay probably is going to be unique in the sense that we are very isolated, geographically isolated, and a lot of the people that we see, the people who need the services the most, are from very small Northern communities"*.

The model currently in place at TBPL involves a partnership with a local agency in which a social worker from this organization sets up at TBPL locations on a weekly basis. TBPL piloted the partnership in the summer of 2016 as a 12-week program that placed a social worker at the Brodie Resource Library for several hours each week. The initiative came about when a director from TBPL joined the community's Poverty Reduction Strategy network in order to *"learn a little bit more about this and how the library can help"*.

Shortly after the library director joined, this network applied for a large poverty reduction grant that involved the idea of having community health workers embedded in places where people gather. While the network was not successful in their application for that particular grant, the director stated that it strengthened their connections and it was through this process that discussions with a social worker at Alpha Court took place and the idea for the pilot was formed.

Upon its launch, a CBC article described the pilot project as “bridging support services to people where they already gather” and “meeting people where they’re at” (Hadely, 2016, para. 2). The partnership has continued and the social worker meets with library users on a weekly basis. The website describes the social worker’s services as follows: offer assistance with information and resources on mental health and addiction services, complete forms, get ID, provide appropriate referrals, connect with housing, and other services. The partners hope to access future funding for this library-based social worker initiative; however, at present it continues to operate under this partnership model.

5.1.2 Case #2 Introduction: Kitchener Public Library (KPL)

Kitchener Public Library (KPL) is a system of five branches operating in the municipality of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. Kitchener is a city located within the Regional Municipality of Waterloo in Southern Ontario, consisting of Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge, known collectively as the Tri-Cities, along with the townships of Wellesley, Woolwich, Wilmot, and North Dumfries. Kitchener has a population of just over 200,000. According to the Region of Waterloo’s Demographics webpage (2018), the region is the 10th most populated area in Canada and one of the fastest growing areas in Ontario, with a large number of students and young families attracted to the lower cost of living. In this region, incomes are consistently ranked as higher compared to other regions of Ontario and poverty rates are lower compared to other Canadian averages.

The Kitchener Public Library (KPL) model involves partnerships with local universities to provide practicum placements for students in the Faculty of Social Work. There are opportunities at both the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Master of Social Work (MSW) levels. The BSW field placement is situated at the Grand River Stanley Park Community Library,

which operates as a shared facility in partnership with the Waterloo Region District School Board. The role is described as a Student Assistant, which works in partnership with the Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region organization.

This case study focuses solely on the MSW placement as I was not aware of the BSW placement until the data collection period was nearing its completion. KPL piloted the first MSW practicum placement at its Central Branch in 2016-2017 and, after its completion, posted a position for the following year. Each placement lasts for two semesters, from September to April, and the MSW student interns for three days per week as a Community Placement Worker with on-site supervision provided by a manager at the Central branch and off-site supervision provided by a registered social worker with MSW credentials.

5.1.3 Case study #3 Introduction: Mississauga Public Library (MPL)

Mississauga Public Library (MPL) is a system of 18 branches located in the municipality of Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. Mississauga is located on Lake Ontario with a population of just over 720,000, and is Canada's sixth largest city. It is located in the Region of Peel, made up of Brampton, Caledon, and Mississauga, with an overall regional population of 1.4 million residents. According to the City of Mississauga's Quick Facts web page (2018), Mississauga has doubled its population in each of the last two decades and is facing a significant infrastructure deficit over the next twenty years. Mississauga's rapid population growth has been accompanied by challenges with meeting the needs of marginalized citizens. More than 182,000 people in Mississauga live below the poverty line and in an article on this pilot, MPL CEO stated that "we really identified this component as a gap in our service" (Wheeler, 2017, para. 4).

The MPL model involves a one-year pilot funded by the federal government. The project is for a new homeless-prevention outreach co-ordinator for Mississauga's public libraries, and

according to a *Globe and Mail* article, “will be used as a benchmark for potential programs across the country” (Boekhoff, 2017, para. 6). The project is called Open Window Hub and this full-time social worker position is aimed at filling a gap in service for residents who have a diverse array of needs and it encompasses every age group. The goal is to provide homeless individuals a chance to work with a professional to find solutions to their situation, and offer referral services that aim to connect them with other community agencies. At the time of the data collection, the physical space for the Open Window Hub was being developed. The vision is that it is a place to essentially just be. Ideas included that it could be a space to store bags, provision of snacks, having a space where people can meet an employment counsellor or have someone who can support their housing applications, or a place to house an identification clinic.

Mississauga is a two-tiered municipality. In this regional system, municipalities only contribute taxes to the region for services provided at that level. In Mississauga social, health and human services are delivered at the regional government level and many community services (within which the library falls) are delivered at the municipal level. This is why there are a variety of partners from the regional and municipal levels collaborating on the homelessness prevention outreach worker project, with the work being driven by the municipal government in this case.

The project was set up so that there is a director at the municipal level who supports the partnerships across other city departments, partnerships with regional government, and partnerships with other community agencies. The library senior management team connects all of their counterparts in terms of other service areas and work on case management, physical space, and so on as part of the library’s role.

The motivation for structuring this pilot as a larger systems solution is because the City is looking to better serve all residents. One participant noted that the library, being its own big business area, could have simply gone to the federal government and would have likely received the funding; they would have created a project which in the end, as this participant put it, *“would have probably just kept serving the library. But the point is that we’re not serving the library, we’re serving the people who go all through the different public spaces so that’s why we structured our project to have a connection to other city services.”* The goal of the project is, in the words of one person interviewed, to *“make the contribution to the bigger idea”* as well as being *“about the process, it’s about a pathway, it’s about working together, policy leaders that are coming together, so that’s really interesting about how this tiny little project can have a bigger contribution.”*

According to MPL planning documents, the project vision includes increased comfort and understanding for City staff; an expansion of a menu of services and capacity to fill gaps; provision of tools and interventions to prevent homelessness; and provision of dedicated space to support homeless persons. Other aims of the program are to enable awareness building of the experiences of homeless individuals; to create open, welcoming, accessible, and safe public spaces; and for this pilot initiative to continue beyond initial funding. The project objectives are to define who the library and municipal departments are serving and how to respond; to build a case so that there can be sustained action and funding; and to develop an awareness campaign starting with the library. Other key project objectives include an identification of who Mississauga’s homeless are and their needs; asking key questions such as who does what and where are the gaps; and providing the pilot project spaces and services to fill gaps.

In a news article on the pilot, the Ministry of Employment and Social Development praised the pilot for attempting something new and different, as well as being people centered as opposed to focusing on the needs of the programmers (Wheeler, 2017). Moreover, in this same article the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development credited the City of Mississauga for its ‘cutting-edge’ new project to help the homeless, calling the project “a prime example of how such a unique outreach program can effectively explore innovative ways to help prevent and reduce homelessness and make a real difference in the lives of community’s homeless populations” (para. 12).

5.1.4 Case #4 Introduction: Edmonton Public Library (EPL)

Edmonton Public Library (EPL) is a system of 22 branches located in the municipality of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Edmonton, the province’s capital city, is located on the North Saskatchewan River and has a population of approximately 900,000. According to the City of Edmonton’s State of the City (2017), Edmonton has one of the youngest populations in Canada and was the fastest-growing city in Canada. Although fewer Edmontonians struggle with poverty currently than a decade ago, there are still more than 100,000 people in the city who live in poverty (Eliminating Poverty in Edmonton, 2018).

In 2011, EPL was the first library in Canada to hire an outreach worker and two more were subsequently added to provide support for at-risk library users through EPL’s community outreach services. The program began as a 3-year \$605,000 pilot project initially funded by the Province of Alberta’s Safe Communities Innovation Fund. The pilot, entitled “Building a Safer Community Through Inclusive Learning”, was done in partnership between the Edmonton Public Library Board and Boyle Street Community Services. Beginning on August 1, 2011 and ending March 31, 2014, the project was built on two service pillars: 1) outreach work by professional

social workers and 2) connecting people to relevant library programs and services to empower individuals through literacy, education, and skill building.

An outcome and summative evaluation was completed on the pilot on February 24, 2015 on the extent to which the library outreach project achieved its goals, objectives, and outcomes. This report noted that the client population served by the library outreach project was significantly different than the original target population envisioned by the project developers. The project proposal envisioned a young (13-30 years) client population that needed some extra support. The data showed that over half of the clients served by the program were 36-55 years, most of whom had spent many years in unstable lives marked by chronic poverty, mental health issues, and addictions. According to the summative evaluation on the pilot, during that time, outreach workers made 14,319 contacts with the client population, over 100 contacts per week.

The evaluation showed that while there was not quantitative evidence to demonstrate that the project had prevented and reduced crime and social disorder around the main Central branch, there was strong qualitative evidence that the project did have a significant impact on the target population and on the real safety in the library. According to the summative evaluation, the value of the library outreach project was most clearly demonstrated by the data showing that by the completion of the project, outreach workers were providing almost one referral in every two encounters.

As a result of the pilot's success, EPL chose to continue and expand the outreach program to five other branches based on the ongoing demonstrated need. The model, now under the name of Community Outreach Services, consists of a team of 3 full-time social workers (called outreach workers) who are employed by EPL. According to EPL's 2016-2018 Operating Report, the library is committed to supporting at-risk Edmontonians through literacy, education,

and social support by including the outreach workers on staff. This team is stationed at the main central branch and also spends a total of five days each week at four other branches where the greatest need has been identified.

One of the participants stated that their caseloads depend on the week, but generally averages between 15-25 clients per week, per outreach worker. However, because the needs are complex and because they never formally discharge anyone, clients often return for other assistance. It was estimated that the outreach workers may have as many as 200 clients each, although they are not working with all of the clients consistently.

According to EPL's 2013 Annual Report, EPL's Social Return On Investment (SROI) report completed in November 2013, the Outreach Program created a value of over \$3.56 million in savings and/or reallocation of funds to Edmonton's downtown between January 2012 and August 2013. It provided the statistics that EPL outreach staff had more than 6,000 interactions with at-risk Edmontonians in which they provided a range of services such as addiction support, medical care location, housing referrals, employment counselling, and suicide prevention. EPL received the Urban Library Council's Top Innovators Honourable Mention in the area of Health, Wellness, and Safety for the community-led and Safe Communities Initiative.

5.1.5 Summary of individual cases and introduction to cross-case analysis

The four Canadian public libraries that make up this multicase study have incorporated social workers in a variety of ways according to their contexts and resources. Thunder Bay Public Library currently utilizes a community agency partnership model in which the social worker is an employee of a partnering agency. Kitchener Public Library utilizes a university partnership internship model in which the public library has a system in place for multiple social work students to engage in collaborative efforts with their library staff. Mississauga Public

Library utilizes a municipal partnership model in which the full-time, City-employed social worker not only works within the library settings, but is also strategically meant to operate within and across a number of municipal departments. Finally, Edmonton Public Library has committed the most resources and has the longest experience and uses the full-time library social work staff model.

The cross-case analysis in the next sections follows the path of this project's research questions and summarizes significant themes that were found across all cases. The first section of the analysis highlights findings related to the question of what is motivating Canadian public libraries to incorporate social workers. The second section of the analysis highlights findings related to the question of what is the nature of social work practice within these libraries. The third section of the analysis covers the other significant themes that emerged related to benefits and challenges related to library social work in these cases.

5.2 Cross-case analysis: Library motivations to incorporate social workers

Across the four cases, these public libraries were motivated to incorporate social workers as a result of a number of key reasons. These included the following aims: to better serve an increasing number of library users with complex needs, which is accomplished by directly supporting library users as well as supporting library staff in their efforts to best meet the needs of these individuals; to change responses to incidents and challenges related to these marginalized and at-risk library users at a systems level by disrupting traditional responses; to align with their efforts to operate according to social inclusion frameworks; to realize their strategic priorities around community-hub and community-led approaches; to provide a service that fits well with the general underlying purpose of public libraries in society; and to engage in the emerging promising practice of public library social workers. I describe each of these motivating factors below.

5.2.1 Better serve increasing number of library users with complex needs

Across all four cases, the most frequently mentioned motivation for incorporating social workers within their operations was the need to support library users with complex needs. The four public libraries in this multicas e analysis are accessing social work skill sets within public libraries in two broad categories: to provide support to library users with complex needs; and to provide support and training to library staff when serving these residents.

5.2.1.1 Supporting library users who are marginalized, homeless, living in poverty

[The challenges were] more and more rooted in societal issues. It wasn't teenage kids making too much noise or rude patrons, it was a lot of people sleeping in the library, a lot of homeless people waiting in front of the library before we opened um a lot of mental illness, a lot of people with addiction issues. It was happening more and more and it wasn't just one location, it was happening in a lot of our locations. And it was regular and consistent.

For many of those folks, their need is at such a basic level, for them to be able to move on it's like Maslow's hierarchy of needs. For them to be able to move on to access other services or other things that the library has to offer, they first need to eat. They need to address hunger and they need to address some of their medical issues.

Within all four cases, these library users were more specifically described by participants and in the document analysis as: marginalized, vulnerable, at-risk, homeless, living in poverty, experiencing mental health and substance abuse issues. Participants and documentation indicated that social workers possess a specialized skillset not currently found in their libraries. It is a skillset that could help to meet the needs of these individuals.

The libraries were motivated to incorporate social workers in order to: bridge critical gaps in service; provide more effective social support and referrals; build stronger relationships with difficult-to-reach residents; engage in crime prevention initiatives; partner with security to deescalate situations and provide more effective responses; help empower at-risk residents; assist clients in making lasting changes towards a better life; and contribute to broader community efforts to

address homelessness and poverty. What follows are examples from each of the four cases to illustrate library motivations in this area.

When asked why Thunder Bay Public Library has incorporated a social worker within their operations, it was noted that they have two large resource libraries located in their downtown core, within close proximity to many of the social service agencies such as shelters and the Salvation Army. In the fall, winter and early spring especially, one participant noted that they “*see a lot of marginalized and even homeless people in our branches*”. Having a social worker coming to the library on a weekly basis is partially meant to assist these patrons with more complex needs, who may require support to find clothing, food, housing, addictions or mental health community-based services.

Kitchener Public Library was also motivated to incorporate social work students within their structure to aid in assisting patrons in an ongoing manner while building relationships with them. As one participant phrased it:

We were looking at that opportunity to make sure that it's not just that we responded to the customer's immediate need, but that there's somebody there who can support those customers in an ongoing way, building those relationships with them so that they find or connect with whatever it is in their community that they need.

Mississauga Public Library's Homeless Prevention Outreach Worker pilot was likewise motivated by the need to better assist library users who are homeless, marginalized, and living in poverty. Moreover, even though homelessness was the initiative under which the grant started, it is a broad continuum so the role is meant to act as a resource, even if someone doesn't identify as homeless. Many of the strategic goals name areas related to serving those with housing instability. The pilot's aim is to provide tools, to engage in more positive interventions, to create better understanding of how to serve homeless library users, to create a seamless system to support them, and to provide a dedicated space for the service.

Edmonton Public Library had similar motivations. The original piloted model from 2011 began the outreach worker program because “an increasing number of people were seeking refuge in the downtown branch” (EPL website, 2018). The pilot was originally created as a crime prevention initiative whose aim was to reduce social disorder and crime and social disorder primarily in and around the downtown central branch. It was based on the premise that outreach workers could help prevent or deescalate security incidents through provision of support, referral and early intervention to vulnerable library users; this would result in making the library a safer environment for all.

According to EPL’s current Community Outreach Services website page, the purpose of the outreach program has shifted somewhat from the original model and the motivation of the library to have social workers on staff is, through social support, connection, education, and literacy, assist and empower Edmontonians in need. In EPL’s recent 2017-2018 business plan, one of the key objectives is to act as an essential partner in community safety initiatives and efforts to eliminate homelessness and poverty.

One of the interview participants further explained:

If you go on the library website, it actually says that the library supports the initiative to end stigma toward homeless people and to end homelessness, so I think that just on the basis of that like they are extremely supportive of helping out the homeless population and to end poverty Homeless people are part of the community and they are people who definitely access the library a lot of the times, and for them it’s the only place that they can go to that’s warm and safe for a lot of people during the winter.

Therefore, in the above four cases the public libraries described their motivation to bring in social work skills to better assist marginalized, vulnerable community members who are often spending a lot of time in their branches due to housing instability, poverty, and other concerns. This focus is also influenced by broader municipal, regional, provincial, and federal priorities of

addressing homelessness. Public libraries are often engaged in wider strategic approaches to address issues of poverty, marginalization and homelessness in their communities.

5.2.1.2 Supporting library staff

Library staff are not social workers. So when we see people that are experiencing mental health issues or issues with addiction, or they need support to find clothing or food or housing, often we don't know where to send them ... Social workers have that depth of knowledge that we simply don't have.

We would see the decline in people, see the mental health issues getting worse ... Staff wanted to intervene, [but] we didn't really know how to help. Although librarians can recommend off-site social services ... they aren't trained social workers, can't be depended on to ... work proactively with individuals in need.

Talking amongst professionals outside of the library world who had some experience with this ... it seemed that [social work] was the right expertise.

A frequently repeated theme across data points for the impetus to involve social work practice into these library systems was the need for specialized training, skills, and approaches increasingly required within their public library environment that library staff do not have, because library education programs focus on librarianship rather than on social conditions. In addition, the impetus for including social workers within library operations often comes from library staff feedback that they need help and that they are concerned about the vulnerable citizens who frequent their branches, especially as they have developed relationships. Another area in which social workers are thought to add support is by allocating these responsibilities to a skilled professional, thereby freeing up library staff time. Additionally, libraries are pursuing social workers to provide their staff with specific trainings related to better supporting marginalized populations. Finally, it is also perceived that social workers and librarians have complementary skillsets.

A number of library staff participants noted that library education programs do not provide adequate training to adequately deal with the types of challenges commonly found in

public libraries. They observed that students are focused on areas such as cataloguing, data access, building collections, responsive programming, philosophies of public libraries, and so on.

One participant observed that in the library education program, students and faculty:

circle around things like how do you serve the community... we don't have coursework that necessarily responds to the fact that really if you're going to work in a large urban or sometimes not even in a large community, you're going to support a lot of customers who they're coming in and they're going through something in their lives.... I think some of the staff don't feel fully equipped...it's challenging and maybe we don't have the comfort level or the familiarity.

Library staff reported feeling that they are put in positions requiring social work skills that they do not possess, and as a result some of the impetus to bring social workers on board comes from within. One of the participants stated, *"Staff had indicated that this would be a really good opportunity to have a social worker here just because of the really varied individuals"*. Similarly, according to another participant, staff were vocalizing that they didn't feel as though there were *"enough supports out there for them ... We were just starting to see that this was something we didn't currently have any training or protocols for"*.

Libraries are motivated to create opportunities for a social worker to build relationships and gain the trust of people who are at the library to help with other needs, in a way that the library staff was not trained or equipped to do adequately. Library staff have relationships with individuals who are coming into their branches every day and as this one participant stated, *"they see people and they worry about them, they try to engage them but are not sure how to help them"*.

Library staff require not only support with referrals, working proactively with people in need, they also require assistance dealing with the emotional burdens as described by this participant:

Our staff provides services that could be on the fringes of that but I think that the kind of work that our workers are doing, they do need that kind of background and training, and much of it is for that to be able to work within that environment and address the compassion fatigue and address the self care, and our staff aren't trained to do that.

In the case of Mississauga Public Library, the motivation to incorporate social workers extended beyond the needs of library staff. There was motivation at the municipal level more broadly, and the library level more specifically, to be able to have professional expertise on board in a staff position that would not only be available for support to library (and in some cases other City) staff to help them increase their comfort and understanding, but that also had in the words of this participant, *“the ability to actually act”*.

Another reason given for the motivation to involve social workers in their public libraries is the lack of staff time to effectively or satisfactorily deal with complex, unfamiliar requests, questions, behaviours, and situations presented by patrons. Library staff described their roles and responsibilities as being very busy, and some participants remarked that it can be challenging for them to deal with more complex questions or situations if they only have a few minutes and a line-up of people behind them.

Libraries are additionally motivated to bring in these specialized skills and approaches that could be used not only to help staff provide the best service possible, but also to increase library staff competence and confidence through trainings provided by the social worker. To illustrate, one participant stated that one area identified was to augment *“the skill set of our library staff. So we do not have that skill set on board and that was a gap we faced”*. For instance, one of the visions of the MPL pilot project and motivations, according to this participant, is for the social worker to *“launch a culture shift among staff through training policies and practices”*.

The data also indicated the perception of social work skillset being very complementary to librarianship. This participant noted that social workers approach situations and individuals

differently than library workers, that “*it’s a really different skill set than library training but really complements each other really well*”. Along these lines, another participant stated that what the social worker and librarians do have commonalities: “*connecting individuals with information and with other people in the community, which is very much what librarians do, right? We’re connecting people with information and building community. This is just from a different perspective.*”

Therefore, libraries have been looking to social work to support their staff because they are at times unable to adequately serve the diverse and complex needs of an increasing number of library users. Library staff perceive that social work skills are a good fit – a complement to the skillset of librarians – and are looking for social work support in providing assistance with difficult situations thereby freeing up their time. They look to social workers, who can assist with taking over when the needs relate to counselling or other services that extend beyond library staff roles, supporting staff in providing appropriate referrals, supporting staff in building relationships with at-risk individuals, supporting staff through emotional burdens, and providing training related to social conditions and issues related to marginalized library users.

5.2.2 Systems level changes to disrupt traditional responses to incidents

If you are kicking people out because they smell, or they’re sleeping or they’re talking to themselves ... are you really being true to your mission, are you truly honouring your mission of the public library? They’re coming to you, they’re coming into your space and you’re looking at people and saying that these people could really benefit from all of the things, just like the person who walks in and says my kid is doing a project on volcanoes, they are equally as eligible and they have a right to have those same services too. It might mean we have to approach it a little differently, and that’s what the social worker allows us to do.

[It is] the third way. The municipality is here, the region is here, and we need something in the middle. We need an alternative approach that’s going to have collaboration between the two sectors to make it work.

A frequently repeated theme across data points for the impetus to involve social work practice into these library systems was the desire to change responses to incidents and better respond to challenging situations at a systems level in order to be more inclusive and move the focus to long-term sustainable solutions in the face of increasingly complex needs within urban spaces.

Within the Mississauga Public Library case, a frequently repeated theme is that this pilot project is described as a “*disruptor*”. There is a quest for new ways of doing things because, as articulated by this participant, “*the need is not going away. It’s actually increasing. So we have to do something. There’s a cost to doing nothing*”. In this municipal context, one participant stated that this is an ideal time to engage in this kind of project utilizing community development approaches because there are not as many resources available for social needs due to aging infrastructure and smaller tax base. The participant remarked:

We have to continue to think about ways to deliver service in a way that isn’t costing more money. We don’t have any more resources to bring to this, so part of this job is bringing partners together to think, have we assigned our resources in the right places? Is there something we can just do differently with what we already have? That’s been our approach to community development, it’s driven by what the community needs but it’s trying to make a business case for that.

The pilot project position of homeless prevention outreach worker is not currently in the city’s or library’s organizational chart. One participant described the social worker’s role as being “*parachuted in to some degree. Supported. Supported by some structures, but sort of exists outside of how we normally work*”.

One of the intentions behind the pilot and the other cases in this study is to consider alternative ways of responding. An example provided is how Security Services is the department that is traditionally called if library staff don’t know what to do about something. It had previously been the only path, so the idea with this pilot is to chart that new path. If instead of

calling security, the social worker that could be called, what would that do? One participant framed it as a business case perspective:

Every time we call security, you'd have like two people coming down, they'd have a car, they'd have mileage, the time that they'd spend on a case, whatever. Is that the best use of security resources when they also have limited resources?

The questions on how to disrupt the traditional ways of responding to incidents and challenges continued. From an alternative path, would having a social worker respond instead of security cut down on the number of security calls, would it support staff differently, and could it support the resident differently? This is how one participant framed the discussion:

Security is not the thing we need the most, but security is still the first responder. So part of that is talking about how does security services change their response? What's that escalation between library and security and if they're changing it for the library, why not change it for everyone?

Because it's not how the current system operates, the question is what happens when the system is disrupted and a new response is inserted, and the chain is now resident to front-line staff, front-line staff to the social worker, unless it's an emergency. The question is "*what happens as a result of putting that link in the chain?*" What improvements might happen as a result of putting this new link in the chain – the link of a new social work position? This participant describes it as "*a different kind of role than city staff typically employ. [The social worker] is the only person that has that kind of skill set*".

For example, in the other cases, participants and document analysis also indicated the desire to move away from calling police, 9-1-1, or security when dealing with challenges such as intoxication. This is illustrated by the following participant's description:

So we're often left calling 9-1-1 um or you know calling the ambulance to come to get people and that's not the best use. I mean in if you're faced with someone who is obviously intoxicated is it the best use of our 9-1-1 service to be calling there, or would it be better to call someplace else? It ties up police, it ties up paramedics to come and remove a person who is intoxicated in our place of business. So we now have a year-

round service called SOS and it's run by this local shelter house, so we kind of triage now with the social worker's help.

This theme also encompasses the discussion on library rules and policies, which ones are necessary, which ones promote exclusion, and how they can be adapted. Banning came up repeatedly across cases, with discussions on how libraries could change traditional systems and look for improvements by asking questions such as what responses other than banning could be applied when an incident occurred, and what other interventions are possible?

A participant summed up the idea of the motivation to utilize a systems-approach when looking at how to better deal with social issues in this way: *"With most of these wicked problems, it's not just one thing that's a solution ... [the social worker] is only going to be as effective as the system is"*.

Therefore, these libraries are looking at innovative systems-based solutions that can disrupt traditional ways of dealing with incidents with library users in order to make better use of resources and create more sustainable relationship-driven solutions that ultimately improve the well-being of marginalized and vulnerable residents. The solutions here involve social workers who intervene where appropriate in the place of security or other municipal services, as well as provide assistance to municipal and library staff in creating more inclusive and prevention focused policies and practices across systems.

5.2.3 Library focus on social inclusion principles and social work fit

So I think what's really been striking for me and for a lot of the staff to see is how important the library is that it is not only a place where there's knowledge-based resources but where there's community, where there's safety where there's inclusivity then you're able to achieve and accomplish all sorts of things because people are feeling like they're a part of something and I think that that's something that we're finding more and more is just how important a role the library is in people's lives.

Public libraries' focus on inclusion has also played a role in motivating public libraries to incorporate social workers within their operations. The language of inclusion is found across all cases, from the strategic documents to the participant comments in the interviews.

For instance, in Thunder Bay Public Library's Strategic Plan, promoting inclusion was emphasized. They referred to the need to address social exclusion and become institutions that proactively intervene and are concerned with social justice. They highlighted the need to identify all barriers to access, whether they be real or perceived, and communicate solutions to the community.

In another case as an example, the CEO of Mississauga Public Library also connected their library's alignment with social inclusion to the decision to incorporate a social worker. She noted in a news article about the initiative to hire a full-time homelessness prevention worker that "As a library leader, I want our libraries to be able to break down barriers and be agents of social inclusion and really live our mission in terms of lifelong learning, and this is the way to do it" (Wheeler, 2017, para. 10). Being a part of an initiative to have a social worker within library operations and connecting to other social services and municipal departments was motivated by a push toward social inclusion ideals.

Similarly, as part of the outreach worker project pilot funding, Edmonton Public Library invited Gabor Maté to speak on social inclusion. Dr. Maté spoke about the "myth of normal", the narrowing of inclusion in society, and the balance between the individual and the collective. In addition, in a video on EPL's website page for the Community Outreach Services which describes the services provided by the library social workers, one of the speakers said, *"you look at the infrastructure of a library the idea of a library the inclusiveness of a library and that's something that's very unique that other systems and organizations and agencies just don't have"*.

Moreover, as outlined in the previous section, one of the emerging solutions entailed a social work presence to assist with managing incidents in a way that moved from an exclusion to an inclusion-based response. The libraries are grappling with how they should best respond – perhaps through referrals, offering services and supports, and opportunities for connection with the help of a social worker. Libraries are motivated to look at creative ways to focus on inclusion frameworks to change responses look to building long-term relationships with library users rather than on immediate consequences. There are now considerations for having a different kind of intervention processes; as this participant phrased it, one that may involve more of a “*reconciliation process*”.

Therefore, the findings in this cross-case analysis suggest that one of the influencing factors for public libraries to incorporate social workers is that they have embraced social inclusion approaches in their strategic priorities.

5.2.4 Community-based approaches and social work fit

[It] kind of paved the way for having social workers by being community led, that there's a lot of vulnerable populations that access, especially in the downtown library, that it makes sense to provide an additional service or resource for them ... there is a strong sense, with the community-led philosophy, there's social responsibility being tied to having social workers in the library, there's a strong social responsibility in the public library ... that really shifted the narrative.

Frequently mentioned in relation to social inclusion frameworks and principles, and common across all four cases, was a discussion on how public libraries are transforming into community hubs. The participants and documentation pointed to a larger strategic direction from library leadership to engage in community-led approaches and principles, which influenced their motivation to include social workers within their libraries. This requires them to be, as one participant remarked, “*actively inclusive*”. The emphasis on moving from passive to active in approach was echoed by this

participant: “*We moved beyond customer service to customer experience, openness and proactive approach to the community*”.

One of the participants noted that Thunder Bay Public Library’s chief librarian, John Pateman, brought with him this approach and that he had even “*written books about the community-led library model*”. This can be tied to broader municipal approaches, as illustrated by how the role TBPL as a community hub is found in a municipal poverty reduction framework document that mentions the library-based social work partnership: “a central access point for a range of health and social services, along with cultural, recreational, and green spaces to nourish community life”. Moreover, when asked about the partnership to have a social worker in its branches in a CBC news article, a library director said that “the program is part of the growing role of libraries as community hubs” (Hadley, 2016, para. 10).

Similarly, in a news article in the internship at Kitchener Public Library, a university field co-ordinator with the Faculty of Social Work who had helped to set up one of the placements observed, “*Libraries are increasingly a hub for the community, meeting different community needs*” (Thompson, 2016, para. 10) and stated that having a social work student in a library is comparable to their social work field placements in community centres, drop-in centres, and other community agencies.

In the Mississauga Public Library pilot, the project is in fact named “Open Window Hub”. One of the participants stated that libraries are considered to be “*natural community hubs*” and another participant stated that they are not a community-led library, but are moving in that direction:

Of the four cases, Edmonton Public Library has the longest experience with the community-led approach. According to the EPL website, the Community Outreach Services

program is based on the library's Community-led Service model. This was adopted into the EPL's business plan in 2006, and "EPL was the first Canadian public library to develop an integrated and strategic commitment to community-led service" (Berry, 2014, para. 3). This involved hiring 20 community librarians as part of the outreach strategy in order to engage with community members to find out their interests, needs, barriers, and ways to best deliver programs. According to an article on EPL's community-led approach, "The community-led strategy that informs [the CEO's] vision also serves the EPL well as it works to determine how to best serve the city's most economically and socially vulnerable populations"(Zabjek, 2017, para. 17).

EPL's website has a section devoted to its Community-Led Service Philosophy, which describes the philosophy as: "We strengthen neighbourhoods and communities by creating connections. We go beyond traditional and physical boundaries to foster relationships and build dynamic, responsive library services" (2018, para. 1). This philosophy is a framework to build relationships, and identify and meet library user needs with a focus on anyone facing barriers to using its services.

Therefore, this analysis indicates that moving toward or adopting a community-led approach is an influencing factor in a public library's motivation to incorporate social workers within their operations, whether it is through partnerships, practicum students, or full-time social work staff.

5.2.5 Purpose of Canadian public libraries and social work fit

The data collected and analyzed across all cases referred to the purpose of public libraries in Canadian society, the need to evolve to remain relevant, and how this influenced public libraries to consider how social work services can assist them in achieving their purpose. The

library motivation to bring on social workers is also influenced by the perspective that there are key advantages of offering social work services within public library contexts.

5.2.5.1 Libraries are for everyone, Evolution and relevance of libraries

Everyone uses the library. Every person uses the library at some point in your life. It's basically the last free public space where you don't have to be anything, or spend anything, or do anything to be here.

[There are] essentially no barriers to accessing the physical space but also very few barriers to accessing our materials, our resources, using us for entertainment or trying to find housing, trying to connect with a job, or trying to connect with loved ones or support network.

Across the cases, the participant comments, strategic plans, and other documentation reflected how the underlying purpose of their public libraries as barrier-free places where all residents are able to visit and use no matter the age and stage of their has played a role in the incorporation of social workers. Moreover, in this modern era, libraries are evolving and looking to remain relevant. Library-based social workers are part of this evolution for these libraries.

Thunder Bay Public Library's purpose statement is that the library "enables people to learn, grow and be inspired"; one of its values statements is "Access for all". Similarly, Kitchener Public Library's vision is "to inspire and enrich for life" and its mission is that "we welcome our community to engaging spaces where people connect, ideas flourish, and lives are transformed". Mississauga Public Library's mission is that "it exists to provide library services to meet the life-long informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs of all citizens" and one of their service goals is "to provide access to many resources in many ways". Its motto is that "the Library changes lives". On Edmonton Public Library's website, their motto statement is "Great libraries welcome everyone". From EPL's 2016-2018 Operating Report, EPL's vision is to be "the gathering place for people and ideas, enabling a lifetime of learning, engagement and possibility for every Edmontonian".

The notion of the need to evolve and remain relevant is also a motivating factor in public library decisions to experiment with the new trend of library social workers. For example, the motivation to participate in the MPL municipal pilot was in part driven by debate and vision around public perceptions of libraries, along with what the purpose is in today's society – and how to remain relevant. One person described how this pilot project has changed people's perceptions, saying, *“the whole argument about oh well everybody uses e-books now, what do you need a library for ...it [the pilot] has opened people's eyes ... it has made people look at us a little differently”*.

Another participant observed of people's perceptions of libraries, specifically those of leaders in City and regional departments, and how they influenced the decision to engage in the homelessness prevention outreach worker pilot:

I think it's surprising to them maybe that libraries just aren't the place to get books anymore. So I think that shift is really the biggest part of this initiative. And I think where it can have lasting impacts is if that's what libraries are doing for people and that's being just what public demand is showing us, how do we have to evolve in order to meet that need?

Another participant who was interviewed, when asked about having social workers employed by public libraries, remarked, *“why would a library do this? I think that the role of a public library is to be relevant and to be timely. We strive to address barriers and meet needs of people in our community”*.

Similarly, a theme that encompasses the various reasons for having social work students within their operations at KPL is to help their library evolve and remain relevant in a way that is connected to their purpose within their community. When asked in an interview for a news story on the MSW intern pilot about what motivated the library to try it out, the library manager

responsible for supervising the student stated, “We need to evolve and we want to be as relevant and as useful to the community as we possibly can be” (Bueckert, 2017, para. 8).

Therefore, participants and the documentation described public libraries as being free, open, warm, positive, barrier-free, and welcoming. They are also striving to remain relevant to their communities. These are positive conditions for effective social work practice, which is further explained below.

5.2.5.2 Libraries are a logical fit for social work practice

For us it was a natural fit because the people are already here. And we felt that we could augment what we're already offering and make our service offering much more meaningful if we provided people who could address very specific needs that our staff couldn't address in a place that is safe, in a place that is accessible and in a place that is already known to them.

There's no stigma in going to the library. It's somewhere everybody would go. And I mean everybody goes to the mall too right, but it's just a more appropriate place because people who go to the library whether it's because they want a specific piece of information or because they need some place to go, it's a more appropriate setting to do the more supportive type thing. I can't think of a better place, actually, than a library for just spontaneous access to support because it's a public place and it's a place where you go for information.

So the outreach worker social work service is duplicated but it's um I think what's different about offering it in the library is the sense of um of how the space has become what's the word, the third space for people. That they're already there. It's not a place that they have to go to, a place that's difficult to access, a place that's only open from this hour to that hour. It's a place of for many a place of comfort.

Building from the foundation of the essential purpose of public libraries and their evolution in today's society, participants and document analysis across all four cases indicated that public libraries are motivated to bring on social workers because their purpose and environment create a logical fit for social work practice for a number of reasons.

First, there is already a diversity of people in the library who are seeking a variety of resources and services; therefore, it's about providing an additional needed service and meeting people where they are already at. Because people are already drawn to the public library for a

diverse array of needs and because the purpose of the public library is to be an open and accessible place where people can seek a variety of resources, having social workers operating in this kind of environment is articulated by one participant as “*a logical fit*”.

Second, libraries are motivated to bring on social workers because they are able to work effectively in a natural gathering space that is destigmatized. The purpose of public libraries in Canadian society was also described across cases to be natural gathering spaces for the entire community, with the result that there is no stigma attached to going to the library. Participants talked about the lack of barriers and stigma and why it makes for a good place for social work practice in this way:

I think libraries can tend to be a more non-threatening place um a place where people are like okay I can just go and hang out I can read a book, I can go on the computer, you know people can kind of do whatever and it's free and it's kind of a safe space um so adding outreach workers to a library I think just adds to that and I think it's a very non-threatening way to um ask for help. I mean I think people are much more comfortable seeing an outreach worker at the library (laughter) than going to some fancy office that's like really kind of intimidating.

This safe environment was echoed by another person interviewed in a video on the EPL site about the outreach worker program, a youth court worker who stated:

The literature is clear and for me working with young people in conflict with the law I see libraries as being an opportunity to engage those young people that live under stairwells involved in the sexual exploitation have been come from terribly abused situations and then they leave their dark corners and they come into this is bright welcoming environment kind of library and they engage with other kids with adults with great authors with people and they take something from that and we're able to identify and focus on some of these young people and provide the intervention that we need to reduce the likelihood of them becoming involved with a law.

Third, the purpose of public libraries was described as being the third space for people and as such, it makes sense to have social workers within this kind of space. Elmborg (2011) explained how it can be possible for public libraries to apply the construct of the Third Space to their operations, which Homi Bhabha has written about extensively as a space of potentially

“meaningful contact between cultures and people. It is also a place of transformation where we can transcend polarity and give rise to new selves. Represented space is rigid, controlled, policed, and defined. Third Space is (at least potentially) open, symbolic, playful, and generative” (pp. 344-345). Elmborg (2011) also described how public libraries are incorporating Ray Oldenberg’s construct of Third Place, to help people “see libraries as alternatives to home and work (the first two places). Oldenberg argued that we need these Third Places to gather to enact democratic rituals” (p. 349).

Fourth, the library has a unique opportunity to provide connection that can in part be facilitated by social workers. In the video on the outreach worker program located on EPL’s website, an outreach client also spoke about the value of the social work services within a library context, pointing to the purpose of a public library to be a community institution that is uniquely placed to connect with all residents, and a public institution that aims to connect its citizens with knowledge, resources, and encourage the ability to empower themselves to create and share their own stories:

I believe the best outreach services in the City of Edmonton are happening here at the Edmonton Public Library because the library is uniquely placed to connect with everyone.

Every citizen of Edmonton can come through these doors and access this knowledge. You're engaged to participate and become active through the library. I've become more connected with the resources available. To me the biggest thing is empowerment helping people to tell their stories and become their own advocates.

Therefore, across the four cases, the findings indicate that these public libraries perceive that social work is a logical and natural fit because people are already there and come freely to a safe, destigmatized environment. As a third space it offers an opportunity for people to transcend the usual power dynamics in society and provide a place where people can have creative, meaningful contact. Similarly, as a third place, public libraries draw citizens to places that are

neither work nor home in order to engage in democratic activities. Finally, public libraries are uniquely placed community institutions which can promote connection and empowerment for its citizens. All of these factors are aligned with social work principles and practice, making library-based social work practice a good fit.

5.2.6 Desire to engage in an emerging promising practice

It's really the tip of the iceberg.

So, having social workers, having community-led philosophy, that really shifted the narrative, so public libraries, um, The American Library Association had even developed toolkits and San Francisco had hired social workers, and just seeing that, you know, that people are treated well with dignity when they come into the space, and that was a whole shift too.

Another frequently mentioned reason for engaging in this initiative is that the idea of social workers in the library is becoming more common and that these libraries sought to engage in an emerging promising practice.

For instance, Thunder Bay Public Library had researched and looked into what was happening in the United States and Canada. Examples of similar initiatives involving social workers within public libraries were given, with San Francisco and Edmonton public libraries mentioned most frequently. When exploring how they could better build relationships, deal with complex situations and support the great variety of citizens who use the public library spaces, the Kitchener Public Library CEO and other library staff similarly looked to social workers to do placements at KPL because other library systems were doing it.

In Mississauga Public Library's case, an article stated that it would be one of a growing number of Ontario cities that have employed social workers (Boekhoff, 2017). One of the participants stated that they "*were influenced with the benchmarking. Social workers in this library was the kind of paradigm we were considering*". Senior library administration had

worked in other library systems in Ontario that had social workers and, according to one participant, “*they experienced the benefit of this model in another place and they want to insert this kind of idea*”.

Even though Edmonton Public Library was the first library in Canada to embark on this type of initiative, one of the motivations for trying out this type of interdisciplinary work came from learning about others’ positive experiences as explained in an article on the project: “The EPL decided to hire social workers to connect with these patrons after researching similar outreach efforts in San Francisco” (Zabjek, 2017, para. 18).

Thus, findings indicate that there is a shift in approach and culture that is gaining momentum. One area of motivation for this library incorporating social work partnerships, practicum students, and full-time library social workers is the awareness of the trend across North America and a desire to see if it would help within their local context.

5.2.7 Summary

To conclude this major thematic section on the motivations of these Canadian public libraries to include social workers in their work, the most commonly cited reason was a desire to better serve library users who were frequently in their branches and the perspective that the social work skillset fills gaps in library staff experience, training, and approaches. Using the language from the data analysis, these individuals were further described as marginalized, vulnerable, at-risk, homeless, living in poverty, and experiencing mental health and substance abuse issues. Connected to this need, the libraries sought social workers in order to support library staff in assisting these library users and provide them with training to augment their own skills and comfort level.

Second, these public libraries were motivated to engage the skills of social workers in their environments as an attempt to change responses at a systems level and disrupt traditional responses to incidents. The perspective here is that social workers had the missing skillset, competencies, and approaches to provide better, more holistic, preventative interventions as opposed to the more traditional practices involving security, EMS, and banning.

Third, a finding from the cross-case analysis is that all sites had some level of strategic buy-in to a social inclusion framework or social inclusion principles. This is connected to the fourth finding, which is that another commonality across cases is strategic buy-in to community hub or community approach ways of operating. In all four cases, when asked what motivated their libraries to look at the trend of having social workers in their libraries, participants described principles of social inclusion and community development.

Fifth, when addressing the move to incorporate social workers, all four cases contained data related to how social work is a good match for general library purpose and relevance because libraries are for everyone. Perspectives shared are that social work practice makes good sense in libraries as they are safe, destigmatized places where residents are empowered to seek information and strive for better quality of life through access. Indeed, a reason provided across the cases was that including social workers in libraries helped to increase the relevance of their libraries. Finally, a sixth reason provided for the inclusion of social workers is that the libraries had heard about this as an emerging promising practice that was gaining steam, and were willing to try it out because of the reported successes elsewhere.

5.3 Nature of social work practice in public libraries

This study suggests that library-based social work practice has particular characteristics, roles, and responsibilities. The findings emerging from the cross-case analysis indicate that library social

work is characterized by variety, accessibility, and mobility. Their primary roles involve supporting vulnerable library users; supporting and collaborating with library staff; networking and working with social serving agencies and municipal departments to assist vulnerable residents; and acting as key community connectors who bridge gaps and provide a means of communication between residents, library staff, agencies, and municipal departments. A lesser role is in policy and evaluation. Each of these factors is described below.

5.3.1 Variety, accessibility, mobility

I would say there is a primary role. I think that we try to help people with whatever they need help with when they come in, so there is such a huge variety of things that we do with people and a lot of it is housing. We help homeless people get housing, but really there are so many other issues that come along with that and we help them with whatever.

We don't have a formal intake it's like knock on the door or you are referred to us someone, you come see us, we figure out what needs to happen and we start working on it. We don't have things for them to sign or to be a part of the program. It's very informal, which makes it very inviting because so many people they just know I can just stop by the office and then you know I'll be able to see a friendly face, and then we don't officially close people's files once things are done.

Across all of the cases, the characteristics of variety, accessibility, and mobility came up regarding where and how the social workers operated within the public libraries.

The social worker's role is varied when it comes to supporting library users; as this participant remarked, *"it's pretty spread out, like people come in for the most random things ... You never know what people are going to ask for help for"*. Another participant interviewed described the role as doing *"a little bit of everything"*.

Being accessible and available are both important aspects of the library social work role. In Thunder Bay Public Library, for instance, when it comes to supporting library users, the social worker puts a sign on the front door saying there's a social worker if people need to talk to somebody for any referrals, supports, or for any reasons. As a participant noted, there is an *"open*

door policy”. Similarly, in Kitchener Public Library, the intern has some set office hours where the intern sits out in the lounge of the library. There are bookmarks available at the information services desk that indicate there is a social worker in the lounge, along with an invitation to speak with the social worker if desired.

Mobility also came up as a characteristic of social work practice in these settings. In Mississauga Public Library, for example, the majority of time spent at the central branch. However, the idea is that the social worker goes where needed, moving around the city and supporting staff where required. The mobility factor of the work was also described by this Edmonton Public Library outreach worker:

So I would say at least every day, well at least every other day we're probably out in the community with clients ... It's definitely a lot of going out. Um you know when I go to the other branch in the morning I'll like get there and I'll kind of go over emails and voicemails and then ... 10 to noon I go to ... the church nearby they have drop-in, they have meals and food hampers and clothing, so it's kind of like a mini drop-in for people and I go there for 2 hours on Tuesday because I know that I'll be able to find clients there and I know there's a lot of people in need there. Then I'll come back to the library and I'll normally have appointments in the afternoon um so people maybe I met them that morning, maybe I arranged it the previous week and a lot of the time it'll be appointments about housing, so doing appointments to arrange housing, it might be honestly it could be anything, um the other thing I do a lot will be making phone calls and advocating for clients.

Therefore, there is a great deal of variety in the role both in terms of types of individuals and types of needs, and it can be difficult to predict what each day will hold. An emphasis of the library-based social work in these cases is on accessibility and availability – social workers spend a lot of time based out of open spaces such as lounges or open window hubs as well as moving throughout the branches and across the communities assisting clients. At these libraries, informal intake and closure processes was also a characteristic; the mandate is broad, and the variety of individuals and needs is vast. The work is generally not restricted, rather it is meant to be responsive through its flexibility.

5.3.2 Supporting residents / library users

In these cases, the library-based social work roles included supporting residents and library users through resources, referrals, and advocacy. Building relationships by being a consistent touchpoint and source of connection for vulnerable citizens was also a key component of library social work in these cases. This support and relationship-building presented along a continuum depending on the model; in other words, all of the library social workers engaged in some degree of this work, but the amount and intensity was influenced by resources. Those full-time library social workers engaged in these activities to a larger degree than those involved in partnership or practicum models as they spent less time at the library.

5.3.2.1 Resources, referrals, advocacy

We're not a service that's like here's a brochure, here's this. We're not that service and I remember applying for this job and it sounded like that. It sounded more cushy than it really is. It's really hands on. We call it supportive referrals. That's what we call it. We might make the referral, but we're like okay, we're going to come with you. Or once someone has their housing intake, we'll go with them. It eases their... makes them a little more confident knowing that they have a support and advocate with them.

Across the four cases, participants and document analysis pointed to the major roles of social workers based out of the library branches as providing resources, referrals, and advocacy for library users requiring assistance with housing and shelters, basic needs, health care, identification, and income. This might include providing guidance, assisting with filling out forms, helping people get referred to case management or mental health and addictions services, and providing general information and resources on community agencies. The role is providing these services for a variety of individuals in a safe environment.

The social worker's role requires having in-depth knowledge about what's available in the community as well as the skills at helping to figure out what is needed. At Mississauga Public Library, the role is also described more specifically as assisting in the development of treatment and

housing plans to overcome homelessness. Referrals are key, and across the cases – to varying degrees - the notion of warm or supported referrals was emphasized in which the social workers went beyond simply providing the name of agencies or contacts to making additional phone calls and even accompanying the clients to appointments. Assisting the client to advocate for their needs is also a major role. For instance, one participant stated that if someone is having difficulties dealing with an agency on their own, the social worker would make a phone call and help them advocate for themselves.

5.3.2.2 Building relationships, being a touchpoint, creating connections

I guess our main role um is to see um who the maybe the marginalized and vulnerable customers are of the library and then try to build relationships with them so that we can start working with them.

We rely so much on our relationships and we really don't take it for granted building a relationship with someone. It's very meaningful for us to be a program where people feel safe and where they feel like they can come to you with anything you know sometimes we don't have anything for people. Sometimes they just need to talk for 15 minutes about whatever's going on and you know they're incredibly thankful for that and they're feeling better after they're able to sit down with someone and be heard. And so the other thing is that we don't have a very formal process, which I think also makes the relationships last so long.

In this cross-case analysis, one of the most discussed and emphasized part of the social worker's role is in supporting library users in need, specifically utilizing relationship-building as a key approach.

At Thunder Bay Public Library, for instance, one of the participants noted that part of their role is to engage with people who come in because “*they just want somebody to talk to*”. At Kitchener Public Library, part of the practicum description for the position states that the social work student will engage and develop new relationships with library users. One of the KPL participants described the aim of the social worker's role to be “*having someone available to our customers who is able to be there for them and actually be a person and a touchpoint for them in our library*”.

At Mississauga Public Library, this role was described by a participant as “*connecting individuals with information and with other people in the community*”. A different participant explained it as trying to get people to engage in the community, with a focus on those who are marginalized, whether they are housed or not, and to increase their social connections.

This theme was a significant part of the focus of Edmonton Public Library’s social workers’ roles, echoed across participants and documentation. One participant observed that relationship building takes time, and talked about the importance of connecting with people, emphasizing that it requires persistence and a soft start:

Certainly the number of people in one of our locations who are camped outside the library and were housed, it took several months to do that and it needed to start first with the outreach worker building relationship and connecting with the people. Much harder to do than one would necessarily imagine because you can’t just say hey I’d like to meet with you, and even sometimes when they do arrange to meet with somebody they don’t show up so it’s uh it’s persistence and it’s patience and it’s sometimes a soft start to building trust first.

Part of EPL’s outreach worker services is running a weekly program whose aim is to build connections and relationships called Friends of the Library, as described by this participant:

It’s a group that we run for community members that are in isolation and want connection and we talk about how their day is going or events going on or um anything really. Anyone can bring up anything of interest and we talk for an hour. We have snacks and yup. It’s pretty great. A lot of people that are there really appreciate it and they come back every week, so we have the regulars. But that’s really the only planned group that we have.

Therefore, library-based social work in these cases involves assisting residents and library users with needs primarily related to housing, shelter, identification, health, basic needs, income, and mental health and addictions resources and referrals. Library-based social work across these cases also emphasized relationship building with residents and library users. Participants and document analysis indicated that the expectation of the role was that in order to provide the above supports and referrals effectively, it generally required time devoted to simply building

relationships, building trust, and building connections with library users. Another aspect of library-based social work that came up was the practice of supported referrals and advocacy in which the social workers would not only provide a resource or referral, but also accompany the client to help navigate the system. The aim is longer-term relationship building in order to provide support over time and within often very complex situations. These social work services vary in degree across the four models analyzed, and there was a greater emphasis on individual client support than on running groups or programs.

5.3.3 Supporting and training library staff

Across these four cases, the social workers focused on roles and responsibilities related to staff. The first is in supporting library staff when working with vulnerable library users. The second is in training library staff so that they can increase their own skills and comfort level in working with vulnerable library users.

5.3.3.1 Providing support to library staff

The bat signal gets shone. Something happens at a library that requires the support of a social worker, and he's going all around the city to support staff.

It's helped our staff members a lot to feel more competent about having an interaction with a customer where they can recognize that there might be something more there... I don't know how to engage in this conversation, I don't know how to support you fully, but I do know that I have a colleague who you can connect with and they're going to do that.

The library-based social workers in these cases provided support to library staff in serving library users with complex needs. An example given by a participant was a situation in which a library user had brought her shopping cart full of her possessions into the library. Because of a library policy stating that this is not permitted, the library staff needed to uphold the regulation. However, before the library staff intervened, they decided to access the social

worker's skills, who could use a different approach to see if, as this participant put it, *"we were able to come out of it in a positive manner besides her being booted out"*.

The position has also been framed in the cases as a resource for staff – an internal support. The social worker is able to support staff who aren't sure what to do. One participant put it as *"that day to day stuff you do where people haven't experienced it, so a mental health crisis, getting to take control of it and things like that"*. The social worker also supports staff through debriefing situations.

Therefore, these library-based social workers assist library staff in providing referrals and acting as a resource, intervening in challenging situations when a different approach could be beneficial, taking control of crisis situations and de-escalation, and debriefing stressful encounters or troubling moments that staff had experienced with library users.

5.3.3.2 Training library staff

Providing suggestions to staff um to manage I guess their own emotional labour in this work. Um and so I think that one of the key pieces has been helping to raise awareness about where that line exists. Library workers aren't social workers and social workers aren't library staff. And you know sometimes those lines can blur.

We're kind of doing that training just so people have an understanding of what trauma is for customers and yourself, and recognizing things like compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, burnout, how to interact with vulnerable, oppressed customers, so we're really pleased to be doing that because we know it can help some people and I think library staff more and more are working with vulnerable customers.

Training library staff and providing them with community resource information was also mentioned as a key role for the social workers across the four cases. The social workers provided a variety of workshops and professional development sessions related to working with marginalized populations, awareness of community agencies and how to provide useful referrals, dealing with crisis situations, and social justice and anti-oppressive principles.

Some specific examples include non-violent training, crisis prevention training, raising awareness regarding mental health, how to respond to library users in a more positive manner, building empathy and understanding of homelessness, how best to approach people, working with at-risk residents, tools to de-escalate situations, effective use of language and terminology, and self-care techniques for staff. Training was also described by one participant to be, in some cases, “*more around that in-service sort of experiential problem solving*” around how to respond and learn from previous interactions.

Overall, these library-based social workers are supporting library staff by receiving referrals from them regarding vulnerable or marginalized library users who have needs and requests that the library staff are unable to meet. The social workers also support library staff by deescalating crisis situations, intervening with difficult client interactions, and helping staff to debrief difficult situations.

In addition, the social workers provide resources and training to library staff. Resources are generally around community agencies and services. Training relates to a wide variety of topics such as understanding underlying factors behind homelessness, poverty, and addictions; awareness of systemic barriers; understanding and helping those who are homeless or facing hardship; building empathy; dealing with crisis or difficult situations; and self-care and emotional labour.

5.3.4 Working and collaborating with library staff

The library staff are instrumental in helping to facilitate engagement or ensuring people have the relationships ... it starts the conversation and it's up to [the social worker] to carry it on.

So, there was a lot of crossover advocacy work. And being a librarian, I'm a bit more bound in how, I can't sit down with them and advocate the way social workers could? So, it's kind of a nice two-step where, when I do find out their stories and I discover the barriers, that allows me to bring them directly to the social workers, where the social

workers have some boundaries and limitations too. So then they would connect me in afterwards, and that helps work things out too.

Across the cases, the social workers were engaged in interdisciplinary teamwork as part of their role. Social workers and library staff work in tandem to provide support to various residents, especially with the aim of ongoing seamless assistance to individuals who may otherwise be difficult to reach or serve. This teamwork entails providing communication and information over longer periods of time and regarding multiple clients in order to avoid gaps in service. They also work on identifying and attending conferences that could be of use to the interdisciplinary efforts. Moreover, the social workers and librarians team up to go out into the community and connect with various individuals at shelters, community kitchens, and elsewhere. Finally, the library and social work staff collaborate on projects, especially with a social justice focus.

5.3.5 Working with community agencies

So we work in a library and ... I just literally have my office and my cell phone. We don't have any funding for anything, we don't have any programs, nothing. So we are entirely dependent on other agencies. So we have to have really good relationships with them. So because we work our butts off, we have developed a really good reputation ... People now come to us for like advice on where to go with really tough cases and ... we also give back so a lot of agencies come to us when they don't know what to do and so we'll help figure out what to do and help glue the pieces together, we call it, and so when we get stuck in a bind, we'll call agencies and say I really need help with this guy. Can you help him with income or can you help get him into a doctor's appointment or can you get him whatever he might need because they know that we work so hard for people and we do work that is so ethical so people really respect us. We treat them with respect, they treat us with respect.

The library-based social workers work with community agencies as part of their role. They do this by engaging in outreach initiatives to various agencies, community groups, and municipal departments. The critical agencies that the social workers focus on building relationships and networking with are often those offering housing services. There is a focus of

provision of wraparound services through the library in which the social worker, library staff, and other agencies work together in service of at-risk and marginalized residents.

In one case, the types of outreach described included to at-risk groups, community outreach, pop-up libraries at community agencies, a women's correctional facility, refugee resettlement services, and a variety of shelters. In another case, the purpose is also to engage the agencies in *“trying to get people to understand the library ... to get community agencies to really think about using the libraries differently”*.

The Mississauga Public Library pilot position was unique in its emphasis on working closely with City departments. The social worker works closely with the security team, which has been described as *“really instrumental”* by a participant. In addition, this position works closely with Parks because this department will often have contact with people who are sleeping in these areas, so they have been key in directing traffic back to the social worker and in identifying people who are in need. Both security and parks department staff reach out to the social worker now through this pilot because it is now a new internal resource. One of the aims is that there is ongoing communication regarding identified individuals so that there is awareness across departments that *“if they come in contact with them again at least they know that people have tried to engage these individuals with supports”*.

Therefore, developing positive relationships, trust, and respect with community agencies is vital to the library social work role. There was also a focus on working with municipal department such as Security and Parks in some areas. The role additionally involves developing knowledge and networks of social service organizations, and educating these organizations about the role of the library and library-based social workers within the overall community.

5.3.6 Systems connector

We are so fluid, we are literally a liquid going into every crevice that the inner city has. We will fill any space that is needed and we don't have any ego about it.

We have the freedom to really do our own thing and decide what's best for the client, and depending on how much time we have or how much energy we have, we have the freedom to really go the extra mile.

So anyone that I work with who is marginalized, I try to create a team around them so I will I like to have a mental health therapist, I make sure they have a psychiatrist, a community worker like maybe an FASD worker, a housing worker and I try to get us to meet like especially when the person is very vulnerable, say they are living outside, still using, sexually exploited or in immediate danger, I try to make meetings for once a week or maybe every two weeks and delegate tasks and really try to figure out how to hold this person out of danger and into safety in an AOP social justice way that keeps the person's dignity intact. So I'll call those meetings, and when I speak to people I'll tell them how much I appreciate them and how we couldn't do this without them.

The thematic areas described in the previous sections highlight a key underlying role that the social work positions have across all of the duties in building relationships with residents, library staff, community agencies, and municipal departments. This role is described by multiple data points as going beyond resource provision, information, or referrals to building relationships and trust in the community. Library-based social workers in these cases often work in tandem with multiple agencies and the residents to provide overarching, wraparound support to the individuals that come into multiple agencies and the library spaces. These social workers are “the glue” in some ways, keeping the residents connected to the services they require.

The library-based social workers are receiving referrals from a variety of agencies, including hospitals, as articulated by this participant:

So then they were calling our social workers and saying 'you know, we're discharging this person but they need help cause they to find a place'. So some of the agencies and institutions are discovering that they can connect to us. And then being on the committee where we're working with a lot of agencies, the hospital created a position where they were triaging some of the people who were really vulnerable and being discharged, so they had a social worker who just kind of connected them to our social workers.

Another participant emphasized the importance of working in was a broad connector, with the aim of bridging gaps by filling a gap for residents that other agencies and services don't cover: *"So we're basically filling a gap that other services don't cover."*

Therefore, library social workers in many cases are taking on a role that extends past individual relationships with library users, library staff, and community agencies. Because they are situated in a public library environment that has fewer limitations, broader mandates, and a wider reach than the distinct social serving agencies or municipal departments, they play a role of connecting the various parts of the system and the individuals within the entire community to one another. With fluidity, they weave through and merge the necessary system components to connect the residents to the supports, and the supports to the residents.

5.3.7 Policy, research, evaluation, and advising

We really we kind of measure our own success in a very different way than the rest of the library probably would ... It's not necessarily um getting all of the things done in a matter of an hour or something like that. A success for us is creating a safe space for people. A success for us is getting a person on income, um success for us is getting a person [housed], you know especially for people with very severe mental health and addictions, if we're able to get them housed, that's a huge success, and that's probably hours upon hours of work, so that's always a huge success for us. Um it's not necessarily about the numbers for us, it's about the individual.

So that we can tell the story of what happened in that situation, and it's really meaningful.

Less emphasized, although mentioned across the cases, were responsibilities related to assisting with library policies, monitoring and evaluation the work, and advising other libraries and municipalities expressing interest in exploring library social workers.

Within the cases, social workers are engaged in initiatives such as assisting with an analysis of library policies and procedures to look for exclusive practices and to make recommendations. Similarly, at one site, the stated aim of the role is to launch a culture shift among staff through policies and practices.

The social workers track data for library reporting, which includes basic demographics and a brief, non-identifying sentence for each appointment regarding its purpose (ex. helped to fill out housing application or a discussion about maintaining sobriety), generally on a smaller scale. At Edmonton Public Library, they use Efforts to Outcomes to track and collect data on the program, which is ongoing evaluation. One of the participants described their reporting and evaluation as also non-traditional, giving this explanation:

We do collect data through a program called Efforts to Outcomes, so you know every client interaction we have we write down where it was, how long it was and what we did, so there is that in terms of the specific numbers I guess and I guess they could look up specific percentages of us doing certain things um other than that you know that's not something we really personally use to measure anything. We really we kind of measure our own success in a very different way than the rest of the library probably would. Um which is having you know having a person feel like they can keep coming back.

In the EPL case, it was mentioned several times that the outreach workers spend some time answering questions from those interested in starting similar programs in their libraries.

Therefore, a smaller part of the library social workers' role within these cases is policy, evaluation, research, and advising those interested in starting their own library social work programs.

5.3.8 Summary

To conclude this thematic section on the nature of social work in public libraries, general characteristics of the role are variety, accessibility, and mobility. These library-based social workers spent their days supporting residents and library users with resources, referrals, and advocacy. In addition to the focus on helping library users, the library social workers provided support and training to library staff. Moreover, the findings show that the social workers also spent time engaged in interdisciplinary collaborations with the library staff in which they worked together to best assist residents, provide outreach, and seek out relevant cross-cutting

professional development. The library social workers in this study also spent a significant part of their time networking and liaising with community agencies to provide a safety net of consistent support to vulnerable residents. This in fact has led to a broader role of community connector in which the library social workers connect the dots across sectors and individuals, providing a more holistic wraparound style approach that is not restricted by a particular social service mandate. Policy, evaluation, research, and advising made up the lesser aspects of their roles.

5.4 What drew these social workers to public library social work?

The cross-case analysis points to a number of influences that drew the participants to social work within public libraries: a valued work environment and a unique opportunity to engage in innovation.

5.4.1 Valued work environment

Honestly like that's one of the best things about the library. We are so supported by like the management team that we can pretty much do anything that we want. We have the freedom to really do our own thing and decide what's best for the client, and depending on how much time we have or how much energy we have, we have the freedom to really go the extra mile ... there is still so much more freedom with this job compared to other jobs.

I don't feel this pressure that there's a target of 700 individuals that I have to see based on the proposed target presented to the Ministry of Health. You have to hit these targets um drummed into it. That whole concept of managerialism... social services have changed ... It goes back to those grassroots and I'm free to do the work without worrying in the back of my mind that I have to see 15 people this week or I have to hit these numbers.

The public library environment is one major reason that these social workers were drawn to try out public library social work.

Participants described better work conditions in their library-based social work. Social workers stated a desire to work out of the typical office environment and in a location that is a nice place to be. Compared to other kinds of social work contexts, a participant noted that the

work conditions were better: *as much as crisis work is interesting and always changing, the hours are tough*".

Moreover, they referred to how previous work and practicum experience in the areas of homelessness, mental health, addictions, and community development made the role appealing. Related to the diversity of previous work experience and interests is the desire to assist people within a library context of a public environment, which is there to serve everybody from all walks of life and who go there for all kinds of purposes provides variety in the work, as this participant noted: *"You get the diversity of individuals, that there's the issues across the continuum"*. This enables the opportunity for well-rounded experience.

Participants and documentation turned up language of freedom, flexibility, variety, freedom, and love of the library as an institution. When asked to reflect on what drew them to the work and what made them want to stay in the role, comments such as the following were given:

I really just love doing the job ... I'm just this is my first social work job and it's such a fantastic job, so like I have kind of done myself a disservice by getting this as my first job because now there's only going down from here (laughter) so I guess I don't know that's the only downfall of it. It's just such a great job.

[It's] really exciting, really really wonderful ... now that I'm here, I can't believe that it hasn't always been here.

Therefore, across the cases the social workers reported valuing the less rigid structure and higher degree of flexibility within library-based environments. Compared to other social work contexts, the setting is often more pleasant and the schedule can be more balanced. The work environment is also valued due to the opportunity for well-rounded practice and the variety of people. It is described as a place where the social workers felt freer and that it is overall a wonderful environment.

5.4.2 Unique opportunity, new field

It's very different. It's not like what you would expect from a quote unquote normal social work job.

In addition to a valued work environment, the newness of the role had an appeal to the social workers across cases. The opportunities to develop new approaches and programs as well as to work alongside other innovators were reasons that brought these social workers to the libraries.

For instance, an outreach worker at Edmonton Public Library talked about the value of reflecting on the benefits of the overall model:

We get a lot of calls like this. People wanting to figure out how and why and stuff. Honestly it's like really good for me because I just an hour of reflection. Like I'm forced to reflect why do I do this work? It is so unique but we forget that it is. Totally forget that it is so cool and unique.

Therefore, social workers across the cases remarked that the opportunity to be a part of something new and innovative was appealing.

5.4.3 Summary

To conclude this section on the motivations of social workers to be a part of library-based practice, social workers reported being attracted to the library social work positions because it allowed them to experience a different environment with fewer pressures to meet specific mandated targets, thus enabling them to practice a freer and more flexible type of social work. They also cited the diverse and varied type of clientele and subsequent opportunity not only to apply existing skills in relevant areas, but also to develop well-rounded skills. A value of the underlying purpose of public libraries was also mentioned, along with an ongoing love of the work both attracted and kept the social workers in their library-based roles. Another major theme around their interest in this particular was the newness and how it is a very unusual opportunity

that enables students and social workers alike to really mould their experiences, influence the creation of new initiatives, and be a part of innovative practices.

5.5 Competencies for public library social work

Through the cross-case analysis a number of recommended competencies for those engaging in public library social work emerged. These include: ability to do a combination of clinical and community practice; base-level education and experience with vulnerable populations; knowledge of and commitment to social justice, anti-oppressive (AOP) and harm reduction approaches; and a nimbleness of empathy-driven communication and attitude. These key competencies will be described below.

5.5.1 Clinical-Community Skills, Hybridized competencies

We need a counsellor and a connector. So somebody who could deliver that sort of urgent service right now, so be very practical on the ground, but also make the connection to the broader system that's not always that practical. So that's why we chose social work ... at least for us, social workers have a number of different skill sets, that those were probably the two at least for now that we saw could immediately benefit.

The data emerging from the four cases indicated that public libraries are seeking social workers who possess a combination of clinical and community competencies. When working with vulnerable individuals, the libraries required social workers with skills in clinical responses and knowledge of how to work with people, often in crisis situations. In addition, they noted that it was also important for the social workers to have connections with the social services network in the neighbourhoods, cities, and regions. This participant observed:

The big thing I think with library social workers is that you need to be able to build connections with other organizations because we literally are just social workers with cell phones. We don't have any resources. We connect people and we do a very good job of it, but we don't have like the housing and things like that. So whoever you know is hired they need to have that skill set to be able to connect with other agencies and organizations.

Therefore, across these four cases, the library social workers were required to have knowledge, skills, experience, and general competencies in a combination of clinical and community practice areas.

5.5.2 BSW/MSW degree, experience with vulnerable populations

I think that the work that they do and working with the other social workers in the city I think that they require that kind of training. Does it need to be an MSW? I don't know. But right now that's the credential that we're using to measure that kind of training. But you know we've talked about our staff kind of doing some kind of work that could be seen as laying beside or smelling like social work. Our staff provides services that could be on the fringes of that but I think that the kind of work that our workers are doing, they do need that kind of background and training.

In all cases, the social workers were registered and possessed a minimum of a BSW. At Edmonton Public Library, a theme arose from hiring perspectives and what education level was required for the position. The final evaluation report on the initial pilot stated that the outreach worker positions should be reclassified to include a degree in Social Work and the RSW requirement. When the decision was made to make the outreach worker pilot into a permanent program, it became apparent that the outreach workers' responsibilities had evolved significantly beyond the referral emphasis as outlined in the job descriptions developed at the service's outset. It was also common across the four cases that the library social workers should have experience in working with vulnerable populations, with an emphasis on supporting homeless individuals. A related competency is a maturity of practice independently and to hit the ground running with a high degree of independence.

Therefore, these library social workers are all required to have a bachelor's level degree in social work – or be students in such a program. With the exception of the students, they are required to be registered. Experience, skills, and openness to learning about working with vulnerable populations are also important to the role.

5.5.3 Social justice, AOP, harm reduction approaches

A lot of social workers don't share the perspective that we do. They're not necessarily trauma informed or harm reduction, things like that. I think it has taken time for the library staff to um well you know I think some I think you know it's all good, jumping on board or like they might be like okay we're just going to let the outreach workers do our thing because they trust us and they know that we're doing good work. Um we have definitely had many conversations with our manager about where we're coming from, our perspective, why we do the things that we do. Because there is a reason behind everything. We're a very social justice based office and we do come from that perspective.

So once you understand those things and AOP is in your core and soul then that's just how you naturally engage with people. And the library is an incredible vessel for us to be able to do that because there's so many agencies and the hospitals and every agency, the expectation is to get something out of the person or to complete a task, but for us our number one, our absolute number one imperative is the person leaves us with a feeling of dignity, so we can get resources done, we can make sure someone has an income, we can get a person a psychiatrist, we can make sure they see their kid, the number one question is did they leave you with a feeling of dignity. If we're always working from that then we're always working from a place of anti-oppressive work.

A key theme for social work competencies common to all of the cases, but most emphasized in the EPL program, relates to the approach or underlying orientation of anti-oppressive practice, trauma-informed, harm reduction, and social justice focus required to do, as phrased by one participant, “*ethical social work*”.

Therefore, a theme that was brought up in the cases is the importance of having certain principles and approaches.

5.5.4 Nimbleness of communication and attitude

Because you're connection with people in all sorts of ways, and all different people, whether it be staff, customers, or other community partners.

In order to be successful in social work practice in these settings, participants and documentation suggest that it is essential to have strong empathy-based communication skills. The Kitchener Public Library practicum placement advertisement, for example, required students to have “demonstrated sensitivity and respect for repeat customers”. Another participant from a

different site cited that “*there is the whole component of empathy that the social worker was able to bring*”.

Flexibility and an open attitude of someone who is willing to go with the flow are also recommended competencies, as phrased by one participant:

A kind of willingness and ability to go with the flow and work in a really changing environment because since I've been here not one day has looked the same as the other and it's really hard to anticipate what the day is going to look like.

Therefore, library social workers should be able to communicate skilfully with a variety of people in diverse situations. Empathy, sensitivity, flexibility, and openness are key qualities.

5.5.5 Summary

To conclude this section on social work competencies that are valued in this type of role, library-based social work is a hybrid type of practice, necessitating skills in both clinical and community development areas. The participants and documentation indicate that a BSW or MSW level of education would be most appropriate, along with the requirement to be registered with the relevant social work bodies. Similarly, the role also requires social workers to have experience working with marginalized individuals, particularly in the area of homelessness. It is considered beneficial for library social workers to have the ability to work independently and hit the ground running.

Library social workers practice in a unique interdisciplinary public environment, one that is influenced by a broad purpose to serve all residents and that sees a vast cross-section of residents enter its doors for many reasons. Because of this general mandate, library social workers will provide assistance across sectors and social services, working in collaboration with library staff and other community partners. The case analysis suggests that having social justice, AOP, and harm reduction approaches are desired competencies.

Library social workers often have longer-term relationships with library users who require their services, providing them with in-house supports through discussions, problem solving and planning, advocacy, and supported referrals. This requires competencies in empathy and interpersonal communication. Library social workers also engage in a free range type of practice in which they move throughout the city, building relationships with individuals, library staff, agencies, and municipal departments in order to connect residents in need to the existing community supports. This often requires a nimble open-minded attitude and flexibility.

5.6 Perceived benefits of library social work

The outcomes were pretty positive and um we'd received a lot of really positive feedback, some pretty positive outcomes for the clients of the program and the return on investment was really good and um you know city council loved the program, the library board loved the program, the library management loved the program and there was no shortage of customers so we decided to continue with it.

And honestly I just I can't envision going to a place where we no longer have outreach workers. They are such an integral part of our service delivery.

I guess I've seen so much positive work done with not just myself and my clients, but with my colleagues and their clients and I've seen how well this model has worked.

Across the cases, participants and documentation pointed to a number of reported benefits of library-based social workers, including benefits to library users; benefits to library staff and municipal staff; benefits to the community; and benefits to the field social work. While all four cases had participants and documentation that described the benefits to library users, Edmonton Public Library had the most extensive data because the outreach worker program has been in place for the longest time and it has had a formal summative evaluation done on the pilot.

In addition, a number of people commented on overall, general benefits. Various participants asserted that “*it's invaluable, really*”, that there have been “*a lot of very positive outcomes*”, and that “*it has been an amazing experience for us*”.

5.6.1 Benefits to library users, success factors

The cross-case analysis showed four areas of success factors in which participants and documentation described benefits to library users: advantages of the library environment for social work practice; creation of a citizen's first approach; development of meaningful relationships with marginalized residents; and ability to fill gaps across the community for more effective social service provision.

5.6.1.1 Influence of the library environment

The really important facet of doing outreach work at the library is the fact that people are already feeling safe and comfortable here the streets can be a very tough place to be and the library becomes a sort of refuge for people and really it's one of the last true public spaces left so to do work with people where they already feel safe there's such a benefit there because they can think beyond just survival and they start to talk about some of their goals and some of their aspirations and be a bit more critical in where they want to go.

They aren't going to Canadian Mental Health, they're not going to a hospital, they're not going to an addiction agency ... to engage ... it's not like walking into an agency ... I think that's a big part of it and I think there's some learning there, truly, it's more accessible to engage or to get support. And it's very non-descript. You can sit with someone in the library and people are not really aware of what you're doing. I think it's important because people can come and then when you're done, people can just stay. If it's a family, they can use the children's section. People can stay and use the computers. It goes back to meeting people where they're at. Meeting them within their communities and re-engaging people back into their community.

A frequently mentioned benefit to library users that appeared across all cases was the effect of the library itself on the ability of social workers to provide meaningful and effective support to library users. The environment – described as safe, destigmatized, inclusive, preserving dignity and privacy – increased opportunities for social workers to interact with individuals who required their services in a way that encouraged connection. Moreover, there is a benefit to library users with this set-up is that they can receive assistance in a safe inclusive environment that supports people connecting with and remaining within their own communities

Therefore, a benefit identified across cases was how the library environment itself created more amenable conditions for social workers to do their work.

5.6.1.2 Citizen's first approach

You are using a citizen's first approach and in a big bureaucracy that doesn't always happen.

More than anything else, the outreach workers provide social support to the people they encounter in the library. The outreach workers are not bound by intake processes, program parameters or any other barriers to access. Clients can show up at the library, without an appointment, and talk to an outreach worker.

The language of this thematic area comes from the Mississauga Public Library case, and the above quote is from a participant who described how a regional CEO made a comment about the citizen's approach of the pilot. This is further emphasized from an article in which the Ministry of Employment and Social Development credited the pilot for "being people-centred, rather than focusing on the needs of the programmers" (Wheeler, 2017, para. 8).

Another facet of being driven by a citizen's first approach is the structure of having a social worker available that is not always appointment-based. The flexibility of a drop-in social work resource person enables a form of consistency so that people can get help when it's needed and in a way that does not require advanced planning, as this participant noted: "*Some form of consistency for people who are consistently inconsistent*". Similarly, from the summative evaluation of the EPL program, the accessibility of the structure was observed to be a success factor as there were no built-in barriers to service, such as intake processes, eligibility restrictions, appointments or "gatekeeper" staff. Clients are able to walk in the door and get assistance.

Therefore, the citizen's first approach allows for residents to take control of the process – to make choices about when, where, and how they may receive assistance. The lack of formal process, availability of social work assistance in a location where people already are, and the general flexibility of the programs can help to put the power back in the hands of residents.

5.6.1.3 Relationships

The thing that I love doing the most and that I am the most proud of is that we work with the people that no one else can or will work with ... the last place they're allowed is in the library.

We do help people with these incredible issues or these incredibly tough barriers, but we do it from true relationship. People haven't been assigned to us in any way. It's not like they have to work with us um for their own livelihood or because a social worker program has said oh you have to do this. People genuinely want to come to us and if you don't want to come to us you don't have to. And often people just come to us to say hi after we've helped them with a lot of things, people just come and say hi, how's it going so you know that relationship is authentic.

It's really I think it's really nice for people to come to a place where it's all about relationship. People know that they can come as they are, and I think that's the freedom that the library has given us, which I think is really, really important and a huge reason for the success of the program for sure.

It gives me someone to talk to you when I'm feeling down or whatever just depressed or just want someone to talk to I want some conversation then it's nice it's nice to know that there's someone's here to listen someone is here to help which is important because a lot of people that come down here end up down you because they've fallen through the cracks of the system already this is probably one of the last places they go where they can actually find that help and get that initiative to move forward.

The focus on the importance of relationships is frequently mentioned as critical to the success of the program. This notion of relationship building was echoed by a number of participants who linked the accessibility, lack of barriers, inclusivity and safe environment associated with the program with the ability to develop true relationships.

Therefore, the cross-cases analysis highlighted a central theme of relationships being beneficial to the overall library social work practice.

5.6.1.4 Gap filler

I think that one of the main benefits for me is just that it's kind of a gap filler. Like that's what the position is. And there are so many services in town that people can access but a lot of people don't really know how to access them or they don't know where to go or where to start so we're just like basically like helping them navigate that. And there aren't a lot of services in town that do that. A lot of places you'll go and they'll say that they offer these services but that's it. If you need something else, you'll have to go somewhere else. But there's not really a lot of guidance for that. I think that's really the gap that we fill. We help them do all of those

things and we'll actually do a lot of those things with them if they're unable to, so it definitely is like a huge benefit to have that and we would definitely benefit from having even more social workers in the library because there's a never-ending flow of people coming in for help.

The evaluation done on the EPL pilot also pointed out that the social workers were able to bridge the gap between public service staff and the vulnerable individuals who come to the library for respite from the streets. The position acts as a gap filler, a navigator, for residents. Focusing the attention on the library users in this type of approach has a reported benefit of getting people connected to supports faster. Participants and documentation also indicated that this set-up of library-based social workers helps to reach populations who may otherwise have fallen through the cracks by providing them with an entry point to services and referrals. It helps people, as this participant observed, “*who wouldn't otherwise know where to look for help ... who recognize they need some help but have no idea where to start*”.

Therefore, a benefit to individuals and agencies involved the library social workers' placement in the community as a navigator and safety net for vulnerable residents.

5.6.2 Benefits to library staff

Across the four cases, the reported benefits to library staff can be grouped into these areas: increased feelings of being supported at work and increased capacity to respond to the needs of vulnerable library users; relief at knowing there is support available for library users with complex needs; exposure to social work frameworks and approaches; and pride at being part of this kind of approach and program. These aspects are described in the following sections.

5.6.2.1 Increased feelings of being supported and increased capacity to respond

I think it's really helpful for librarians to understand that they don't have to know how to do it all and they don't have to have all of these skills because I think we put a lot of pressure on ourselves. If you talk with public librarians ... eventually the conversation is going to come around to dealing with these really intense stressful situations that are happening in our spaces.

Staff are really grateful to have [the social worker] on board and have somebody that they can talk to. The ability to relieve some of that tension by somebody who actually has the skills to do it, it makes a huge difference.

Across the cases, participants and document analysis indicate that library staff feel relief and grateful to be receiving the support from professionals with the right skillset in their libraries. This participant observed that having social work students engaged in a practicum at the library, for example, has “*helped our staff members a lot to feel more competent*” when they are interacting with people who have requested assistance in areas such as housing that they are unable to provide. The library staff also talk about how they have learned from the social workers, as this one participant summarizes: “*I’ve learned a lot from working with them, asked a lot of questions*” ... “*and culturally it has helped me*”.

At Edmonton Public Library, the evaluation that was done on the pilot reported on benefits to library staff as having had a significant impact on the capacity of the library to respond to the needs of the target population. The summative evaluation stated that staff reported how their increased understanding of the target population helped them to assist vulnerable individuals and to advocate for them to other library users.

Therefore, library staff within the four cases report that the social workers are benefitting their work environment, their sense of comfort, and their ability to better respond to the needs of their library users.

5.6.2.2 Relief at knowing there is support available for library users with complex needs

But I think the other benefit is that staff really cares about the people that come into our spaces. And my sense ... is that um there’s greater confidence in knowing that we have people on staff that will be able to help those who are very needy. That it’s not turning people away or pointing them in another direction outside of what we have in our own spaces, so in many instances we’re still saying that we would like to connect you with our outreach worker and it may take a little while, but there is something that staff can turn to say here’s how we can help you, and here’s what we can do for you. And I think for staff that’s been a boost to know that there is something that we can do ... That’s just my perspective from what I’ve seen from

staff and what I've heard about how pleased they are that they were able to direct someone to one of our outreach workers and that person got help, there's relief that they are able to do that.

I've had a lot of particularly women who, maybe they flee an unsafe situation and in that case, they leave a lot of materials behind, and in that case it might be easier to say that first to a social worker than to come up to a desk in the library and tell someone your situation. And you don't want to tell your story twice about your situation, so if they tell the social worker and then the social worker can work with us to figure out how to help them access the library again, if the fees were a barrier, but given their special circumstances that the fees occurred, that might be something we can waive. So it also makes us more accessible, more approachable, and helps us connect with customers who may have stopped using the library.

Another benefit to library staff is that it enables them to provide the level and depth of service they want to the at-risk residents who are in the library frequently. Many of the benefits expressed by participants across the cases were described using adjectives of emotions: empowering, release of anxiety, relief, and grateful are some examples, especially as they pertain to having an internal resource that they can directly use for these individuals for whom they care.

Therefore, the benefits to library staff also occur because they know that there is internal support available for library users whom they had previously been unable to help.

5.6.2.3 Exposure to social work frameworks and approaches

[It's] going to challenge us to think about it in a different framework, which I think is really positive.

[It will help to] create an approach that allows us to think beyond our preconceived notions to build more empathy toward some of these situations.

In addition to the social work skills and general knowledge being of assistance to library staff, it was also mentioned several times that library staff appreciate having the social work perspective in their workplace. When speaking of the social work students, one librarian stated that they are. Stated another way, the library staff valued how the social work internship was able to “bring a lens to the work that might not be there otherwise, or might be overlooked”.

Therefore, a benefit to library staff is an expansion of perspective and an opportunity to explore alternate ways of approaching some of their work.

5.6.2.4 Pride at being a part of this kind of program and approach

I think there's been a benefit for staff as well. I think there's been number one I think there's been a pride that we're doing this.

A key benefit mentioned to staff is not only about the support received by the outreach workers, but the pride they experience at working in a library with this kind of community-led and inclusive approach. Moreover, in terms of recruitment, the model is used to build on the sense of purpose and pride, as expressed by this participant:

These are.. it's sort of like that philosophical orientation towards working with marginalized individuals and individuals who are vulnerable is something that they want to get behind and also they may want to work alongside and work with and also of our more recent hires that orientation is there. It's kind of intangible in a sense, but for me as a supervisor it's helped me to recruit the right kind of people for working in the environment downtown. It's fantastic. That's one of the pluses.

Therefore, a benefit of library social work in these cases is that library staff report increased pride in their workplace and it is used as a tool to recruit like-minded library staff.

5.6.3 Benefits to the community

Based on analysis of the interviews and documentation from the four cases, two kinds of benefits to the community were described: increased partnerships with agencies; and perceived improved overall community environment. These two benefits are be further discussed below.

5.6.3.1 Increased partnerships with agencies

And the other really cool thing is we don't share funding. Like a lot of interagencies are scrambling for the same funding so they almost are competitors a little bit, we are totally on the outside and we don't I'll say oh I helped 500 people this year, give me money. ... we don't have to go to funders and hustle for funding so any of those people that we help, like Homeward Trust we work so closely with them and they get all of the people who we helped them house, they get all the numbers for their funding. And our model works and we house like an insane amount of people because of the way we work with people and they get to

claim the credit but we are totally cool with that because we aren't in it for credit and we are lucky we don't have to be.

Benefits to agencies also came up often in the analysis of the case data. As the quote above illustrates, there are positive interactions with the agencies in part because they do not compete for funding while sharing similar aims. This adds to a collaborative spirit and helps to increase desire to partner. It was noted by one participant that their library had received “*positive feedback from external agencies who were happy to have these opportunities to build relationships and start partnering with each other*”. The positive feedback even came from agencies that the library did not directly interact with as an organization, but who worked with the same people that also were regular library users.

Another pattern that was observed regarding having a social worker on staff is in the chain reaction that it caused in which, as a result of the positive experiences, a number of other professionals were incorporated into the library operations:

We ended up with a whole array of professionals in the social services, caregiving, educational sector that we would never have thought to partner with if we hadn't had this positive experience with social workers, and we ended up having speech pathologists and tutors and health nurses and a whole range of public health and social services professionals that we were able to bring into the circle because of the contact we had made with the social worker because they bring with them their own network and they bring with them their own approaches to solving issues.

Therefore, the analysis reveals a benefit to community agencies as being the opportunity for increased partnership in a non-competitive atmosphere, as well as an opportunity to develop links within the library settings.

5.6.3.2 Perceived improvement to the overall community environment

I feel that the Edmonton Public Library is the best crime prevention tool that really we have.

On a broader community scale, the formal summative evaluation on the EPL pilot project states that while the causes of crime and social disorder in downtown Edmonton are multifaceted

and the impact of the library outreach project on security incidents in and around the library is not a straightforward relationship and cannot be demonstrated statistically, the data did demonstrate the library's growing capacity to respond more appropriately to incidents in and around the library.

Taken further, EPL's Social Return on Investment (SROI) report, completed in 2013, showed that the outreach worker program allowed savings or reallocation of over \$3.56 million in Canadian dollars, about \$3.28 million U.S., to Edmonton's downtown between January 2012 and August 2013 with an initial investment of \$630,000 Canadian, an SROI ratio of 5.7:1.

Therefore, another benefit for the broader community reported in the cases is that when the library-based social workers are able to do their work successfully, there may be broader implications for the community related to safety and well-being of residents.

5.6.4 Benefits to the field of social work

It's kind of, uh, new in the field of social work for them as well. They're kind of paving a different path in how to treat customers. So, I think, in both perspectives, the social workers are doing something really unique and really successful.

And I think some of the social agencies are starting to look at different approaches too, where having program requirements, or criteria, qualifications, where there are so many parameters and limitations around it, that they're saying they can't take this case on, they refer them to the social workers at the public library because there isn't a boundary, there isn't a funding, where you're cutting someone off.

The theme of benefits to the field of social work also emerged from the data. Benefits mentioned by participants across the cases include an increase in sources of practicum placements for students in Faculties of Social Work across Canada; the creation of a new type of social work practice that is opening the eyes of social workers in various agencies; and enhancing the existing network of social support services.

Therefore, the emerging practice of library social work is reported to have benefits to the larger social work field.

5.6.5 Summary

To conclude this section on benefits of library social work, the cross-case analysis asserts that the benefits named by participants and documentation from the four sites include benefits to library users, benefits to staff, benefits to community, and benefits to the field of social work.

The safe, destigmatizing, inclusive environment of public libraries helps preserve the dignity, privacy, and autonomy of residents who may wish to seek social service assistance. Providing library-based social work in these accessible environments where people are naturally gathering is described as beneficial to library users. The approaches used in the four cases are also perceived as being citizen's first, which is advantageous to residents who may receive services in a flexible, drop-in, accessible location offering them greater choice in when, where, and how they seek help. The cross-case analysis also points to the success factor of the library-based social work focus on relationships. With this emphasis on longer-term relationship building in an interdisciplinary team, the most marginalized of the marginalized are potentially able to receive more assistance and not fall through the cracks. Finally, a reported benefit mentioned in all cases is that by acting as systems navigators for and with residents, library social workers are gap fillers who can help to speed up access to services and connect people to help that they may otherwise not find.

Benefits to library staff that were mentioned across cases include a number of elements. The staff report increased reported feelings of support that they no longer have to cope in isolation; they report being grateful for the social work assistance within their branches. The data also points to a perceived increased capacity of library staff to respond appropriately and with

empathy to the great variety of situations presented by library users with complex needs. They also report a benefit to be the sense of relief and confidence that support to marginalized individuals is taking place internally. This was reported as making the library staff feel like they are more accessible, more approachable, and better able to connect with residents who may have stopped using the library. The benefits of being exposed to social work frameworks and approaches were also named. Library staff articulated that having social workers operating within the library environment enabled them to see situations through a different lens and to adopt a different philosophical orientation that emphasized empathy to a greater degree. Another benefit to library staff articulated in the cases is a pride at being part of this model, and how this has also influenced recruitment and hiring practices to add staff with this same

Benefits to the community were described as helping to increase partnerships with community agencies, aided by the fact that there is generally a collaborative rather than competitive environment because the library social workers aren't chasing the same funding dollars. Another aspect of increasing community partnerships mentioned was how the inclusion of a social worker in the library opened the door for other helping professionals to be considered. At a broader level, it was also reported by Edmonton Public Library that there is a Social Return on Investment (SROI) allowing a savings or reallocation of over \$3.56 million in Canadian dollars and that there are signs of improved responses to incidents in and around the downtown branches.

A final category of benefit mentioned in the cases relates to the field of social work. In addition to increased availability of practicum placements, a benefit mentioned was opening the eyes of other social workers to the possibilities of a more open-ended, less cut-off kind of practice. It is also beneficial to social serving agencies throughout the communities where

library-based social workers operate to have additional avenues of support and referral for their own clients.

5.7 Perceived challenges of library social work

There were several main challenges associated with library social work described across the four cases. These include: capacity of the social workers; starting a new program; supervision; differing approaches and communication; public perception and buy-in; evaluation; and general social work challenges. These are further described below.

5.7.1 Capacity

I think the challenge is just that they're so good at their job, that the demands on their services just increase of their services.

They're kind of paving a different path in how to treat customers. So, I think, in both perspectives, the social workers are doing something really unique and really successful, and they're kind of becoming victims of that success.

There's just an endless stream of clients coming their way. I always liken it as um you know uh finite resource being the three outreach workers and an infinite need.

In the Edmonton Public Library project evaluation, one of the challenges noted was regarding workload and the demand placed on the outreach workers because the demand for their services had increased significantly since the beginning of the pilot. This is one of the downsides of the open, flexible, unstructured program. One of the participants commented on how agency referrals can create challenges:

That's how we get overwhelmed with people, just by people like especially the hospital does it a lot. They will send people over and like when they're discharging people and there's not enough time to make a solid plan for the person they'll say just go to the library and they'll help you.

This onslaught of people coming through the doors requiring services was brought up across cases as a challenge. Ways that participants described the issue was in having to manage

the expectations of the roles in addition to having limited resources with only one social worker on staff. These participants remarked:

We've got one person, so we can't overtax that one person. We have to protect that person in terms of ... personal health and safety. So that's kind of one of the balances we're trying to strike right now.

The scope of the problem is much larger than one social worker could be capable of actually handle. So we wanted to temper down people's expectations.

This is echoed in another way in this comment: *"It's a challenge in a way again I'm not an expert in everything"*. The flip side of the variety of people and types of social work that people can do in the role is that social workers cannot be knowledgeable about everything; they cannot be everything to everyone.

On a related thread that is discussed in more detail in the next section, the challenge of capacity in starting a program from scratch and the scope of things that need to be accomplished is a major challenge. Put directly by one participant, *"Yeah, some days you can feel it. It's overwhelming some days"*.

Therefore, a challenge of library social work frequently brought up across cases is the capacity of the social workers to meet the high demand in terms of client numbers, client needs, and expectations.

5.7.2 Starting a new program

Program development is a role unto itself. I want to move faster than I'm capable of. I have ideas, I want to go go. The challenge is that it grows too big and I can't contain it. I can't contain it.... I can't sustain that kind of change. Good ideas, but careful.

At Mississauga Public Library because of the program being a pilot and being so new, a significant challenge that was articulated across the case was the management and vision, *"it's definitely evolving and changing as we go"*. The challenge is doing the front line work at the same time as the program is being developed from the ground up.

Other challenges related to running the library social work program appear in descriptions of the issues around privacy, consent forms, and selection and implementation of databases – in other words, the blueprints of an agency, because a library is not set up in this way.

At Edmonton Public Library, the outreach worker project final evaluation noted that strategic program planning is an important challenge, and the report observed an urgent need for strategic program planning that will enable the library to set meaningful boundaries on the outreach work and integrate it more fully into the work of the library. Planning ahead was described as a challenge, as illustrated by an outreach worker:

Um, hmmm, (laughter) that's a tough one just because I feel it's so hard to plan ahead, and it's hard to plan ahead because there's just so many things that come up out of the blue and so many crisis situations that come up, and you kind of have to decide what's more important and what you need to do right away, so really it's more of just going with the flow like making appointments and planning stuff ahead of course is extremely important but stuff comes up all of the time like on a daily basis and you just have to juggle everything around and make sure you are organized.

This was also a theme at Kitchener Public Library. Another challenge mentioned in this case is around the role and responsibilities. Because it's a relatively new set-up, only in its second cycle, there is a degree of creativity, flexibility and ambiguity with the specific aims and parameters of the work.

Finally, related to setting up the library-based social worker program components, accessing suitable physical space was articulated as a challenge. Participants noted that the combination of accessibility and privacy was required.

Therefore, a significant challenge reported across cases is in building and implementing a new type of program often with limited resources and lack of clear path forward.

5.7.3 Supervision and connection to social workers

A supervisor, someone in a higher position that evaluates our work, looks over our case notes, makes sure we're doing the right thing. Someone we can look to for advice and kind of get

feedback on that would be great because we don't have that ... That's one of the flaws of the program because if another library decided to start a program like this, and the team wasn't as solid or the team wasn't really as connected, they aren't really accountable to anyone. Like they could be making mistakes or being unethical or doing something and then no-one would really know ... Because there's no-one who's really checking up on it. There needs to be a team lead.

Another area of challenge is in social work supervision. At Kitchener Public Library, for example, the participants noted that especially in a social work placement, there are situations that may come up that require an experienced social work supervisor who can help with that guidance in the moment. In this current structure, with the social work supervision occurring from an off-site mentor, even though it was reported as working quite well generally speaking, there can be challenges with not having “*that debrief option in the moment*”.

At Edmonton Public Library, across the case, supervision and professional oversight were named as challenges. The final evaluation report highlighted a concern with lack of professional oversight, noting that the outreach workers need support and direction from a social worker/supervisor who understands the work and challenges from a professional social work perspective. Similarly, across the case at Mississauga Public Library a challenge that came up is around supervision. In this case, there is an external supervisor who is attached to an agency located in a different municipality:

Staff need to come and support me here. I'm trying to keep it that it's the library, maybe extend to community centres and parks but it doesn't help until people really come in and understand the role.

Therefore, not having access to supervision from experienced social workers who understand the specific demands and qualities of library-based social work is named as an important challenge.

5.7.4 Differing approaches, communication, isolation

[The social worker does things] in a social worky sort of way and the library staff do things in a research and information sort of way.

It's not like [the social worker] is in a network of other social workers. [The social worker] is in a network of librarians and library workers.

Another area of challenge that was brought up in this cross-case analysis was communication around the social worker's role and approach. It was mentioned that some library staff had issues related to understanding how the social worker's approach may be different than library staff. One aspect that required clarification was that the social worker doesn't, as this participant noted, "*do counselling or therapeutic interventions*".

Put another way, one of the aspects of the differing approaches relates to how people should be addressed, with the library staff perceived, for instance, by one participant as being "*a little more authoritative*", although there was hesitance in using that word and it was further stated that "*it's not what they intend to do*".

At Edmonton Public Library an additional challenge pertained to communication between library staff and outreach workers, as described by this librarian:

One is around the great library community of staff understanding what the outreach team can and can't do. Kind of making informed referrals to the outreach team, not just sort of giving out the outreach team's phone number. So the interface between the library staff at large and the outreach team is always sort of has been a challenge and continues to be a challenge. It's always something we're fine-tuning and working on.

Having one social work position in an environment of library staff is a related challenge. Here it is directly articulated by one participant: "*... part of the challenge is being alone. It's more isolating*". While one of the benefits of the position is its freedom and autonomy, the flip side is that social workers in these environments are the only person with this kind of background:

So within the context of a social service agency, you're kind of surrounded by like-minded people who are in similar positions and who are initiating and developing programs, and so here a lot of it has been driven by me ... So sometimes you kind of try to pitch ideas and in all fairness just have a blank stare you know what I mean?

While the social worker can seek guidance in the community, there are observations that essentially at the libraries there is no one for the most part, and much of the program development and implementation have been left to the social workers to really go and run with.

Many of the participants had ideas on how to improve the isolation and challenges in collaboration sometimes found in the work. These participants provided the following recommendations and perspectives:

I think that the whole point about a key to success is that the library staff to have a greater understanding of the social work discipline is important and also the social workers to have an understanding of what libraries can do is important. Um because you know for many of us we go to our school library and maybe the public library when we were kids, and maybe an academic library and as adults maybe we're not always as drawn to the public library, or maybe we're using the public library in the way we're using our school library, we're not fully cognizant of the wider realm of it, so the more that the social workers know about the work they do, the more people they can help.

It would be great blue sky world if there were more interdisciplinary courses available so that a social worker could pick up a library class around community led work and a library student could pick up a social work class, you know how fantastic would that be.

I know that social workers have continuing education requirements as well. We don't have that formality in the library world um and so you know I guess for library workers it could be having social workers come to our conferences and do some presentations because I know that they would be eagerly received. And maybe the other way around for social workers as part of their mandated PD. Maybe there would be some opportunities that would focus on work on libraries.

Therefore, communicating and interacting within a library setting is a stated challenge for these social workers due to differences in approaches and experiences of isolation. More dedicated, focused opportunities for learning and collaborations between social workers and library staff were suggested as potential ways to strengthen the ties and understanding.

5.7.5 Negative perceptions, lack of buy-in, funding

There were challenges at the outset uh in terms of the optics to the community, so when I first got into this role I received a lot of feedback from other library colleagues ... that more mainstream clients of the library [were] saying that they felt less safe downtown now that the outreach team was there and that the outreach team was attracting those people to the library in quotes, um they felt that this was a detriment to their safety and they felt that there were more visibly homeless people using the branch. I'm not sure that maybe it highlighted the issue and made them aware of it, but over time those negative complaints about the presence of the outreach team in the library have really dwindled to the point where I don't think I've had any this year.

I remember when I started working at the downtown library just when the program was starting with one social worker and ... we were both starting around the same time. There was a lot of um how should I say, the library staff was wondering what the purpose of having a social worker there and whether this would really be a good thing or a bad thing. People were really divided. Some people thought it was a good thing because we definitely had a lot of people at the library that could use a social worker's help, and other library staff thought well it's just a bad idea because it's just going to bring in more uh more trouble, that's the way they would see it. More troubled people to the library and we already had a lot of those people like that so they didn't want more of that.

In the context of budgets I quite understand other libraries across the country saying you know we'd like to have social workers on staff, but it's really a budget issue. And it really is because you don't want to displace current staff and in many cases you can't displace current staff without paying a pretty heavy price for doing that.

Challenges mentioned across the cases related to having library social workers concerned public perceptions, staff perceptions, and buy-in – which all influence funding. At Edmonton Public Library, this was phrased as perceptions and resistance. The final evaluation report on the pilot states that although real safety has increased in the library, perceived safety is still subjective and some library users who report that they do not feel safe at the downtown library have indicated that they prefer to go to other branches. The evaluation notes that library user comments/complaints about “those people”, disruptive behaviour, safety and related concerns increased. Another comment from this evaluation is that the public perception of the target population and the outreach program remains polarized where some are strongly supportive, some are strongly critical and most are somewhere in the middle.

At Mississauga Public Library, this is described as a challenge with buy-in, which came up a number of times. In some cases, it is difficult for people who are not regular users of the public library to understand, as expressed by this participant:

Actually I think some of the questions that I've had are from people in other areas of the government who aren't directly related to libraries who you know um you know managers or whatever in other municipal areas who maybe don't use the library, actually it's probably people who don't use the library on a regular basis because those who use the library on a regular basis, they know, they see the people that come in and they see the ones who are struggling.

At Thunder Bay Public Library one of challenge is that it is difficult to move this initiative further than the current model because of budget constraints. Because it is a unionized environment, most staff members are unionized and working with two collective agreements, so making changes to job descriptions, titles and classifications can be slow and requires building a case. It is also difficult to find adequate and consistent sources of funding. For example, there was a provincial call for proposals for community partnerships that the library participated in, which wasn't successful.

Participants offered a number of recommendations or learnings on how they approached getting buy-in and approaching funding challenges.

One participant noted that it is possible to approach funding in phased-in ways:

Well there are a couple of approaches to that. Our funding right now is in a grant from the federal government, so that's how we're being funded now. I think you can phase it in operationally you can phase it in by using existing resources or you can really go to town and make the case and ask for new money in terms of new FTEs. So it all depends on what kind of situation you're in, what's the appetite for increasing operating costs to make this happen. You have to be innovative and creative in terms of how you sustain it.

Echoing the literature, one of the participants spoke about the need to build credibility with funders:

And we're credible because we do what we say we're going to do. And we provide council with the information they need to be able to make good decisions. Again that trust has been

well established through the hard work of our CEO's and when we presented the information on the social workers and the evidence from the SROI, it was kind of a no-brainer. So we were able to say yes, we want to put this into our operations. This is how we can do it. Here's what we can do, here's how we can do it. Then we presented the budget, then it was approved. But we're very fortunate here in Edmonton that we have tremendous support from our council. We're very very lucky. Not all urban libraries are in the position that we are in.

The need for fuller body of research to support funding was also articulated:

I think that when we have a fuller body of research and when we have more I don't want to say quantitative but I guess it is quantitative because what I would really like to see is an evaluation of the cost of policing for example. If you had embedded social workers in the library, for example, does that affect your outcomes for the people who are using it would they improve and would the cost of policing go down? That sort of thing because that's impactful. I think funders would really take notice of something like that and I think we would be in a much better position to have embedded social workers as an operational protocol in the library if we could make those kinds of arguments.

Therefore, a challenge of including and maintaining social workers within these public libraries pertains to optics, perceptions that it will create more social disorder, lack of understanding from the public and staff, and funding gaps. Being creative, flexible, and credible were recommended ways of dealing with these challenges.

5.7.6 Evaluation

I must admit it is a weakness in our program right now. The program was heavily evaluated in its first three years. It's been much less evaluated, it's been sort of off the cuff kind of more operational management I would say, rather than strategic visioning and direction setting for the program since it has become more operational ... In the last year we started using Efforts to Outcomes to track and collect data on the program, so that's kind of more of our ongoing evaluation. But yeah we haven't gone back to those kinds of return on investment, longer term outcomes kinds of evaluation that were done for the first three years. I mean the first three years it was a requirement of the program that came, it was a string that was attached to the money. Um and you know EPL since then I mean we have our own internal evaluation processes, we do reporting to our board every year, but uh we haven't done that kind of rigorous evaluation of the outreach program since then ... And it's something that has been weighing heavily on my mind because I don't want to just kind of rest on the laurels of that first three years. I think we do need to do more systematic reporting and considering of work. Just from the workload perspectives from each of the outreach team, but um it's been a challenge for me to devote the time to that that would be necessary so.

Evaluation was noted as a challenge across the cases, with less emphasis placed on this as a role within the work. The final evaluation report on Edmonton Public Library's pilot pointed out that an area of challenge has been data collection because much of their data comes from multiple sources such as staff, security guards, and the social workers. The evaluators needed to rely on them to accurately and fully report encounters, but they recognized that there can be significant variations between individuals.

Therefore, this issue was echoed across the four cases, with observations made about the need and desire to incorporate more evaluation into the programs.

5.7.7 General social work challenges

There are very difficult parts of the job, but none of them are because I'm in the library. Like the job is hard and there are struggles all of the time but the library doesn't restrict my job in any way. Yeah, it's not because like I'm in the library that certain things are frustrating or difficult.

The work is very difficult and we don't have sometimes you know it's hard to see where we're succeeding because you're just bogged down by the system, bogged down by things just not working out, and so many people don't fit into the system boxes that they have set out, um and it's very frustrating because you know we're a program that doesn't have boxes and we are always the ones that are kind of um getting the people that have fallen through the cracks and we're trying to get things back on track for that person so we're up against some incredible challenges so it's very important for us to remember the very small successes.

A common challenge articulated in the cases deals with general social work challenges that have little to do with working in the library. One participant puts it like this: *"the usual stuff that doesn't pertain to the library specifically but just people who have the idea that if I talk to a social worker, my whole life is going to be fixed by the end of the conversation"*, which is something that was reported to go with the territory and the job, no matter where.

The final evaluation report on the EPL pilot also talked about the general lack of resources as a challenge that social workers are facing in that demand for resources like housing, addictions treatment and mental health programs far outstrips availability.

Therefore, across the cases participants identified that a challenge is simply the nature of social work practice in general.

5.7.8 Summary

To conclude this section on challenges, the cross-case analysis presents a number of key challenges reported by the participants and found in the documentation. Capacity of the social worker to do the work appeared as the most frequently mentioned challenge. This involves managing the workload as well as expectations of staff and clients. There are relatively few social workers dealing with many complex, multi-faceted, systemic issues. Another related challenge discussed across the four sites is in starting a new program or initiative. Knowing where to start, attempting to do front line and strategic planning work simultaneously, and trying to create social work systems within a library environment from scratch were all mentioned.

Next, lack of supervision from social work professionals was noted as a key challenge and a cause for concern. Across the cases, a repeated theme is the need for the library-based social workers to receive guidance, debriefing opportunities, boundary-setting, and ethical support from those within their profession. Similarly, another challenge is the isolation that can exist for the social workers who are often working in teams of library professionals. In this situation, differing communication styles and approaches between the social workers and library staff were noted as areas of tension.

Another challenge is dealing with perceptions from the public and library staff that involving social workers in public libraries will in fact decrease safety and increase the number of “unwanted” individuals, thereby creating a negative environment. Similarly, participants and documentation pointed to difficulties getting buy-in and securing adequate, sustainable funding, particularly within the unionized workplace.

The final two challenges echoed across sites were evaluation and general social work struggles. There can be a difficulty finding adequate resources for evaluation, as well as the issues presented by the complexity of the work. The challenge presented within the social work profession in general was the last area of difficulty that all cases described, as the work can often be stressful, frustrating, and complex.

5.9 Summary of cross-case analysis

To conclude the cross-case analysis, these public libraries sought to bring on social workers in order to better serve an increasing number of library users with complex needs and to better support library staff in their efforts to best meet the needs of these individuals. They also wished to change responses to incidents and challenges related to these marginalized and at-risk citizens at a systems level by disrupting traditional responses. Their motivation to apply social inclusion frameworks and realize their goals around community-hub and community-led approaches were additional motivating factors. Moreover, social work is believed to be a good fit with the purpose and relevance of public libraries in society. Finally, all of the libraries were motivated by the reported successes and growing number of other libraries across North America that had engaged public library social workers in their settings.

There were a number of findings related to the nature of social work practice within these libraries. Across the cases, signs point to the characterization of this type of social work to be about variety, accessibility, and mobility. The library social workers focus their practice on direct outreach, relationship building, and service provision to vulnerable library users. They also spend their days assisting, education, and partnering with library staff in the aid of these library users. Building and maintaining an active network of contacts within social serving agencies and municipal departments so that meaningful timely service can be provided to their library clients are also key. In addition,

participants spoke of an essential element of the position to be community connectors who fill gaps and fluidly link residents, library staff, agencies, and municipal departments in order to serve their library clients.

The social workers spoke of being drawn to practicing in these contexts because of the valued environment that offered more freedom, flexibility, variety, well-rounded skill development, and the opportunity to be innovators. Furthermore, the hybrid nature of library social work in which both clinical and community development practice is undertaken requires certain competencies related to personal attributes of empathy, experience with marginalized individuals – especially those experiencing homelessness, a minimum education level of BSW, and abilities to apply a breadth of assessment, intervention, relationship building, and extensive community-based networking skills. Social justice, AOP, harm reduction, and trauma-informed approaches were also named as important in this type of practice.

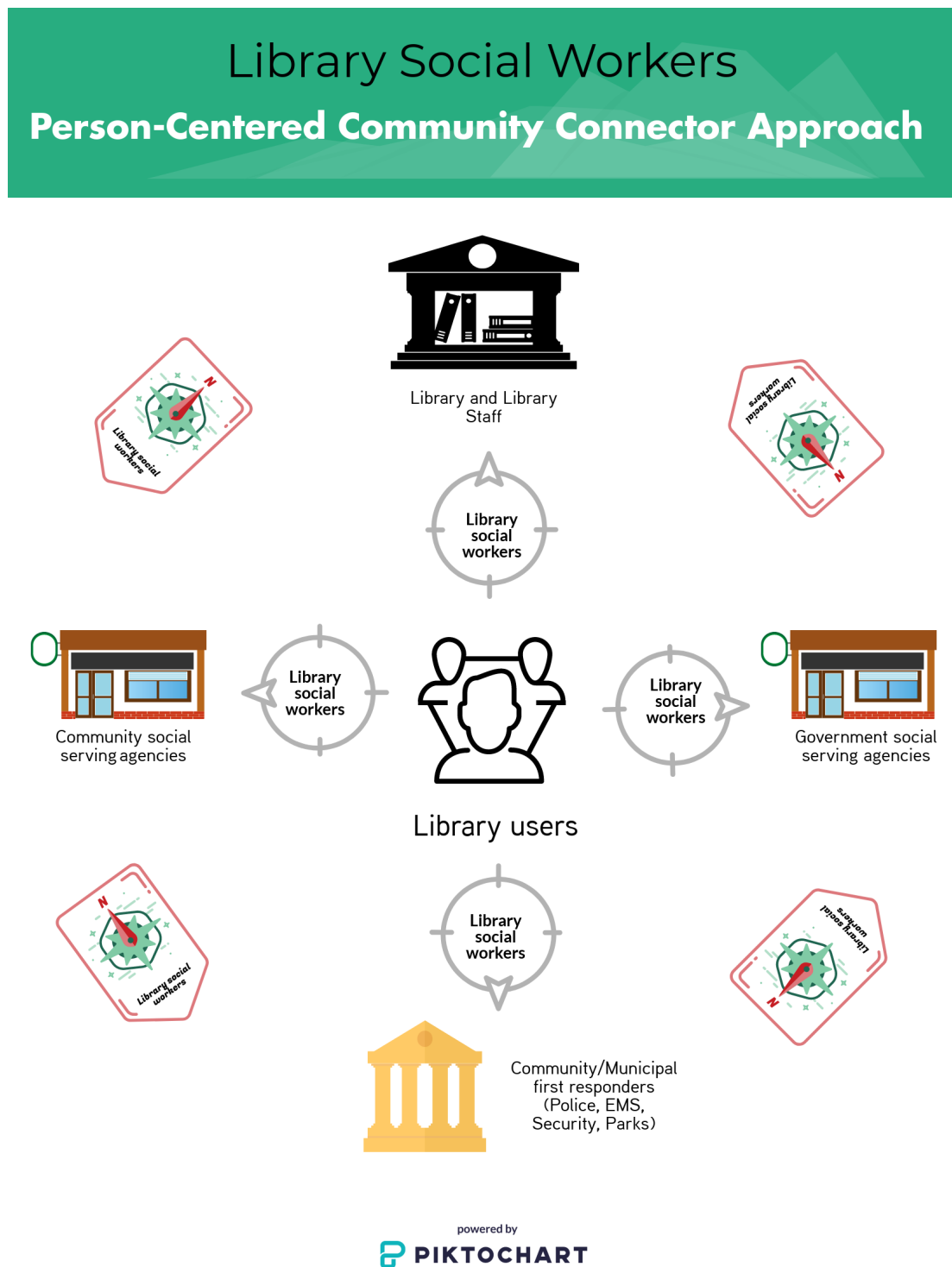
The cross-case analysis highlighted some benefits and challenges of library social work. The main benefits participants and documentation related to practicing within an environment that is not restricted to a particular mandate and that is openly accessible to all residents in their own communities. By focusing on a citizen's first approach, this kind of library social work benefits library users who are not restricted by formal processes and can choose to use the services and build relationships. The ability of library social workers to bridge multiple agencies can benefit library users who have an additional safety net within a destigmatized environment that offers a continuum of services and maintains the dignity and autonomy of the individual. The benefits may even extend to the field of social work and the broader community, based on participant perspectives and document analysis.

While there are benefits, there are also significant challenges. Capacity is an important concern, with the social workers often facing high demand, unstructured schedules, competing demands, lack of boundaries, and high expectations. Creating a new way of doing social work within a different environment was also named as big challenge. In addition, lack of social work professional supervision can place a burden on staff. Communicating across difference and not fitting in with the other library staff were mentioned as problematic at times, along with a sense of isolation. Getting buy-in, facing negative public and library staff perceptions, and finding funding sources for this kind of initiative were named as challenges. Finally, just doing the job of social work – whether it was in the library or elsewhere – was described as being a consistent struggle.

5.9.1 Visual summary of library social work

Figure 5 provides a visual illustration of the context and relationships depicted about library social work practice across the four cases. This person-centered approach places the library users – those community members coming to the library for a variety of reasons – at the heart of the work. The residents – library users – are placed at the centre to emphasize their autonomy and choice. They are freely able to decide whether or not to engage with the library social workers. The nature of this practice is to be flexible and mobile, connecting individuals in need with the supports they require through relationships that can take place naturally in a safe, destigmatized library environment that meets people where they are at and leaves them with dignity. These relationships intersect across individuals and organizations. With the fluid assistance of the library social workers, the individuals strengthen their networks of support that they can access. These networks include the library, community organizations, government social services, and municipal departments.

Figure 5. Situating library social work in its contexts and relationships



CHAPTER 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In the current study my aim was to explore the emerging area of library social work in Canada. The focus of the study is organized around its two guiding research questions. The first is what is motivating these Canadian libraries to include social workers within their settings. The second builds upon the first – now that social workers are beginning to work within Canadian public libraries and alongside library staff in interdisciplinary ways, what does this library social work practice look like?

Because this has been happening in Canada only since 2011, there is very little published literature that explores library-based social work practice – especially from the social work discipline itself. By better understanding the motivations and conditions for library social work practice, the social work discipline can better support and develop this new practice alongside the public libraries, which are currently working without any significant attention from the national, provincial, territorial, or regional social work bodies.

The study began with an online survey aimed at gathering the experiences and perspectives of Canadian public library staff on this topic. The analysis of the survey helped to provide insight about whether this trend, already established in the United States, was on the radar across Canada, and what Canadian public library staff thought about this kind of initiative. It also helped to shape the focus and content of the semi-structured interview questions. Following the survey, invitations to Canadian public libraries known to currently incorporate social workers went out, with the result that four libraries agreed to participate and wished to be identified.

I interviewed 17 people across the four cases and at each site, a variety of social workers, librarians, and other key staff participated. Senior management and direct supervisors were involved in the interviews, along with community librarians, a library assistant, and a municipal director. The social workers interviewed ranged from those working from the partnership models, including one from a housing agency and one who was an MSW practicum student. The other social workers were all full-time library staff. For each site, I collected and analyzed relevant documents, which included website pages on the social worker services, strategic planning and evaluation documents, communications materials related to the programs, and news articles on the initiatives.

What follows in this chapter is a summary of the main study findings provided in the context of the literature review findings, all guided by the research questions. This discussion begins with what has motivated Canadian public libraries to extend their staff and partnerships to include on-site social workers, followed by a look at the four models found within the cases. It then turns to a closer examination of library social work's main characteristics within these cases. Within each of these areas, I provide a clear articulation of implications for social work practice and recommendations for research. Table 8 provides a summary outline of the study's major findings, as well as the implications for social work practice and recommendations for further research.

Table 8

Summary of Major Findings, Including Implications for Social Work and for Future Research

Topic/Area	Major Findings	Implications for Social Work	Questions/Suggestions for Future Research
Library Social Work Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The four models in this study are labelled as: Library Community Partnership; Library University Partnership; Library Municipality Partnership; Full-time Library Social Workers.• Depending on context, resources, and commitment to community-led frameworks, public libraries creatively adapt a number of library social work models.• The continuum reflects on one end partnerships between libraries and community agencies and local universities to have social workers or social work students embedded in their operations on a smaller scale. With increased resources, library social work models incorporate full-time social work staff within libraries who may also be attached to municipal departments and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Findings support the continuation of existing partnerships and the impetus to create new partnerships between community agencies and public libraries, as well as between universities that have Faculties of Social Work and local public libraries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How might evaluations be done on current models?• These models are all from urban contexts – what research might be done within rural and Indigenous communities?• What other library-based social work pilots, programs, initiatives are happening across Canada? What is their approach and what are their experiences?

<p>Public library motivations for incorporating social workers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Libraries are turning to social work skills to help better serve library users who are marginalized, living in poverty, experiencing precarious housing, or otherwise described as vulnerable and having complex needs. Social workers are believed to have a specialized skillset not currently found in libraries that can support both library users and library staff. Survey respondents and interview participants believe that social workers could make significant contributions to the work of public libraries. Libraries are incorporating social workers to intervene where appropriate in the place of security or other municipal services, as well as provide assistance to municipal and library staff in creating more inclusive and prevention focused policies and practices across systems. Focus on social inclusion frameworks has played a role in motivating public libraries to incorporate social workers within their operations. There is a larger strategic direction from library leadership to engage in community-led approaches and principles, which influenced their motivation to include social workers within their libraries. Social work is a logical and natural fit within public libraries because people are already there and come freely to a safe, destigmatized environment. Public libraries are uniquely placed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social workers within agencies, government, and universities can include public library staff as potential audiences for courses and potentially powerful allies in the social justice, community development, inclusion, and clinical work being done. Professional associations such as CASW and ACSW can actively engage in advocacy, professional development, projects, and creation of supported interdisciplinary communities of practice with their public library counterparts. More active advocacy and engagement of municipal and regional players in developing the systems-focused solutions which include library social workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the current level of awareness among social workers of this emerging area of practice? What are the experiences and perspectives of the library users in relation to library-based social work services? What are the results or impacts of placing social workers within libraries (interventions toward assistance compared to expulsions, banning, security)?
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<p>The nature of library social work practice</p>	<p>community institutions which can promote connection and empowerment for its citizens. These factors are aligned with social work principles and practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an awareness of the library social work trend across North America and a desire to see if it would help within their local context. • It is a hybridized practice in which a combination of clinical and community development work takes place. BSW/MSW level of education and professional registration are valued. • There is a great deal of variety in the role both in terms of types of individuals and types of needs. • Practitioners should have experience working with marginalized individuals, particularly in the area of homelessness, and be skilled at de-escalation, assessments, and interventions often with mental health and substance abuse factors. • Competencies of empathy and interpersonal communication were highlighted along with a nimble open-minded attitude and flexibility. • Having social justice, AOP, and harm reduction approaches are desired competencies. • Accessibility and availability – social workers spend a lot of time based out of open spaces such as lounges or open window hubs as well as moving throughout the branches and across the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social workers can work to increase their knowledge and awareness of this new practice. • By including library social work practica and adding library social work curriculum, universities could not only help to build this new field, but also prepare students for working in public library contexts. • Social work organizations, professional bodies, and faculties can help to develop core competencies, best practices, and other regulatory supports for this emerging field. • Echoing implications in the previous category, provision of funding and staff support to create an association of library social workers in which those currently in practice can have a digital hub of resources and forum for communication, alongside organized annual conferences to share, learn and grow. • Inclusion of library social work opportunities on social work job boards and volunteer postings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are library social work best practices? • What are comprehensive lessons learned and recommendations for this kind of practice? • Further studies on the perspectives and experiences of library social workers are recommended. • Further studies on how to supervise and support library social workers would be beneficial. • Research on specific type of social work practice (What kind of clinical work? What kind of community development work?) • How does this type of social work practice compare to that found in more traditional environments?
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communities.

- Informal intake and closure processes is a characteristic; the mandate is broad, and the variety of individuals and needs is vast. The work is generally not restricted, rather it is meant to be responsive through its flexibility.
 - To varying degrees, warm or supported referrals are emphasized - social workers went beyond providing the name of agencies or contacts to making additional phone calls and even accompanying the clients to appointments.
 - Focus on longer-term relationship building in order to provide support over time and within often very complex situations. Took place along a continuum, based on model.
 - Focus on working with municipal department such as Security and Parks in some areas.
 - Library social workers play a community connector role to work in tandem with community and municipal programs - fill in the gaps and cracks in the system. Not limited by a particular social service mandate, target population, or other limitations typically found in social serving agencies.
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6.2 Motivations

Research Question 1 – What is motivating Canadian public libraries to hire social workers?

In order to capture a fuller picture of what is taking place within the Canadian context, this research question expanded to include not only the model of hiring social work staff within Canadian public libraries, but also other models such as partnerships with community agencies and local universities. I discuss these models further in the next section. The themes that emerged from the survey and cross-case analysis on what is motivating Canadian public libraries to initiate public library social work in their branches are in line with the literature review findings.

Survey respondents reported that their libraries are primarily motivated to bring social workers on board in the quest to provide better service and connections for vulnerable library users, as well as the desire to support library staff through assistance and trainings that they believed social workers would be best placed to provide. The survey results indicated that libraries are also motivated to seek out community partnerships to bring in social workers, and that public libraries would be motivated to engage social workers within their operations if there is a need in the community due to lack of sufficient community services or if social problems significantly worsened.

Similarly, in all four cases the motivation to embed library-based social workers primarily derived as a need and desire to improve responses to increasing social concerns around their branches. In the language of the participants and within the documentation, the social factors related to library users were more directly described as being marginalized, vulnerable, at-risk, homeless, living in poverty, and experiencing mental health concerns and substance abuse issues.

These findings are consistent with the literature, in which the dominant theme around

public libraries and social work centres on the increasing pressure to respond to library users with complex needs who often frequent their branches, with the result that library staff often report feeling as though they lack the necessary skillset, orientation, time, and resources to adequately serve the needs of these populations – social workers are considered to be well-placed to support library users and staff alike (Blank, 2014; Clevette & Halberstadt, 2015; CUPE, 2016; Giesler, 2017; Hines, 2015; McKendry, 2013).

In the current study, a theme on motivation to engage the skills of social workers in their environment is an effort to disrupt traditional responses to incidents involving library users and look at systems-level changes that focus more on holistic, community-wide prevention or intervention measures than on punishment-oriented approaches typically used such as calling security or banning. Public libraries are at the table alongside provincial, regional and municipal departments and community leaders working at a systems level to change broader responses to homelessness, poverty, and the needs of marginalized residents.

This is echoed in the literature, which finds that increasingly American and Canadian public libraries are becoming active players in poverty and homelessness reduction strategies in their cities, which are looking at creative ways to place more resources within public libraries or develop innovative partnerships in combination with public and non-profit service agencies (Bethune, 2018; Green & Jaeger, 2016; Hines, 2015). According to the current study as well as the above literature, the insertion of social workers within public libraries is believed to have the potential of creating a new link in the chain, with the potential to disrupt punitive or exclusionary responses and enable redirection of residents in need toward existing social services in a location where they naturally gather.

Another area where there were consistent findings between the current study and the literature is in the influence of social inclusion frameworks and community-led approaches on public libraries' motivation to incorporate social workers. Similar to themes of needing to pay attention to exclusion and inclusion found within the literature (Blank, 2014; CULC, 2017; DeFaveri, 2005; O'Neil, 2016), the cross-case analysis pointed to values of social inclusion and responsibilities to work toward a more equitable society by ensuring that their libraries dismantle barriers and actively promote inclusive policies and practices. Adopting inclusion frameworks is an influencing factor in the decision to engage the skills of social workers within their branches to assist in barrier-free, needs-based service provision that also targets those typically marginalized.

The literature, like the current study findings, also suggests that the move toward social inclusion principles, policies, and practices helps to pave the way toward community approaches (Pateman & Williment, 2013). In all four cases, when asked why the libraries had expanded their services to include social worker availability to library users, the theme of libraries as community hubs and the opinion that community-led service models are desired appeared. The current study echoed relevant literature discussions advocating a move toward community hub and community-based approaches that advocate moving from a traditional passive model of information service provision to an active model of community development and engagement principles.

The new Canadian Library Hubs Meeting Community Needs project initiated in February 2018, for example, states that “after examination of the literature and our own research, we advocate for creating a community hub of social services within the library system” (para. 1). In community-led models, public libraries actively look for ways of responding to exclusion,

increasing resident engagement, and collaboratively developing and providing services based on needs especially of the underserved (Hoyer, 2013; LHMCN, 2018; Pateman & Williment, 2013; Williment, 2009). The perspective is that social workers have skills and approaches that are aligned with libraries as community hubs and community-led service models.

More broadly, the analysis of data from the current study is also aligned with the literature on the general purpose and need to stay relevant that public libraries are debating. In this modern age of technology, public libraries are re-imagining themselves as cultural and community centres (Berndtson, 2013) and there is a turn toward libraries as having a significant role to play in acting as agents of change, community improvement, social responsibility, and social justice (CFLA, 2017; Gorham, Green, & Jaeger, 2016; Hines, 2015). As a profession whose primary aim includes social justice, social workers are thought to be a good fit with libraries that position themselves with these core values.

In the current study, a related finding is that libraries are motivated to bring on social workers because it is a logical fit within their settings, where people already naturally gather and which they described as safe, destigmatized places where residents are empowered to seek information and strive for better quality of life. Study participants asserted that public libraries are “third spaces” and “third places”, offering a “third way” approach.

These phrases link to the literature, in which third spaces are described as having the potential to inspire meaningful contact between people and cultures – they are open, generative and symbolic public spaces of transformation in which division can be transcended (Elmborg, 2011). As a third place, libraries enable a place where public can engage in activities essential to democracy and social cohesion (Elmborg, 2011; Heritage Saskatchewan, 2017). Increasingly, as third sector community organizations (Giesler, 2017), libraries are embarking on third way

approaches in combination with other public and non-profit social serving agencies (Green & Jaeger, 2016) to find solutions to society's "wicked problems", as phrased by one study participant. When talking about these changing roles, the participants and documentation in the current study indicated that social workers could assist public libraries achieve their broader aims and indeed, that the move toward embedding social workers in their libraries could go help increase the relevance of libraries to their modern communities.

Finally, the current study dovetails with the literature review findings around the momentum of this trend. In the current study's Phase 1 national survey, nearly 70% of respondents indicated that they believed or strongly believed that social workers could make significant contributions to the work of public libraries. When asked about their motivations for exploring library social worker within their locations, this study's participants and the associated documentation pointed to it as emerging promising practice that they wished to be a part of because of its successes and possibilities. In the words of one participant, the practice of introducing social workers into library operations is only the tip of the iceberg. Moreover, the survey indicates that library staff believe that social workers can make significant contributions to the work of public libraries. This belief and observation is echoed in the literature on library social work, which is suddenly starting to grow in volume (Kelley et al., 2017).

6.2.1 Models

The multicase study indicates that libraries are responding according to their contexts and resources. Similarly, the literature revealed a number of different ways that public libraries are incorporating social workers and their approaches generally depend upon financial resources, with many relying on initial grants for pilots that they hope will turn into more sustainable funding down the road (Hines, 2015).

The literature that indicates funding to be an issue for many North American libraries; libraries must cultivate good relationships with government funders and build persuasive business cases for new initiatives (Stenstrom & Haycock, 2014). One of the current study's themes is that lack of funding is a barrier for many Canadian libraries that would otherwise hire social workers as part of their staff. Participants spoke to the need to get buy-in from funders and to be credible.

Like libraries elsewhere, those that participated in this study were creative in their approaches to implementing library social work and adopted a number of models ranging from part-time partnerships to full-time staff (Fraga 2016; Kelley et al., 2017; Luo et al., 2012; Ramsay, 2014). The models could be described as existing on a continuum. Those libraries with fewer resources or that wanted to explore library social work on a smaller scale partnered developed partnerships. In the community agency partnership model, the social worker is an employee of a partnering agency. In the university partnership model the public library has a system in place for social work students to develop their clinical and community skills while engaging in collaborative efforts with their library staff.

With increased resources, the models move further along the continuum in which full-time social work staff are embedded within library branches. The municipal partnership model has a full-time, City-employed social worker who works within the library settings, as well as operating within and across a number of municipal departments. The full-time library social worker model has library resources directed toward internal positions that in the case of EPL are permanent and part of the union.

6.2.2 Implications for social work practice

Implications for social work practice abound, especially in the Canadian context. The literature and current study findings suggest that public libraries are open to engaging in partnership opportunities with community agencies and universities in order to access social work skills. Moreover, the findings in the current study suggest that social workers and social work students consider library-based social work a very meaningful and effective environment in which to practice. An important implication, therefore, for social work practice is for leaders – for instance, social serving agency directors or university faculty – to initiate pilots and partnerships. Community agencies may benefit by being able to extend the reach of their services by working out of public libraries. Universities may benefit from having additional practicum placement opportunities in a unique environment that students may greatly enjoy and learn from. In addition, university-public library partnerships could increase meaningful volunteer opportunities for students.

On a larger scale for the social work discipline, active creation of partnerships and promotion of the potential of library-based social work practice has an exciting implication for an entire new area of future employment opportunities. In the area of social work education, faculties of social work could prepare future social workers for this burgeoning field by including curriculum on non-traditional social work contexts, with a focus on libraries.

Another important implication for social work is the connection to inclusion and community development principles. As explained earlier, public libraries that adhere to social inclusion principles and pursue community hub and community-led service models state that these factors play a part in their pursuit of library social work programs and services in their branches. Social work has a long history with community development approaches that it can

apply to public library environments. Community social work researchers and practitioners can expand to library environments, working alongside the burgeoning community approaches there. This has implications across the education spectrum, from practicum placements to long-term community building endeavours.

A related implication is in social work's attention to public libraries as major players in creating systems change. Currently, social workers are found in a myriad of public sector roles, influencing municipal, regional, and federal initiatives. By increasing their awareness and understanding of the general work of Canadian public libraries and seeing how it intersects with broader strategies targeting poverty reduction, ending homelessness, and addressing mental health needs to name a few, social workers can improve systems approaches by joining with public libraries in advocating for innovative initiatives such as increased public library social work projects and long-term staffing positions.

A final important implication for social work is in its efforts around social justice, homelessness, poverty reduction, and mental health. There are shared core disciplinary values between library sciences and social work that many in the field of social work may not currently know about. Both fields are concerned with enhancing human well-being, meeting basic needs, social responsibility, public good, democracy, and addressing conditions of inequity by bringing resources, power and capacity to citizens (CASW, 2005; Green et al., 2016; Hines, 2015; Kelly et al., 2017). To further illustrate, these areas are ones which the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) produces position papers and research publications. For example, in the past two years, CASWE has published its position and research on the commitment to address homelessness in Canada, affordable housing, universal basic income, poverty reduction and disabilities, and the role of social work in mental health. The literature review and the current

study's motivations of public libraries to bring on social workers pointed to these same areas that discipline of social work and its main national and regional bodies consider to be part of the foundation of its professional role.

It appears that up until very recently, public library and social work researchers and practitioners have been working separately to address similar social issues. It also appears that the field of social work may have a serious blind spot when it comes to the work being done by public libraries. The implication therefore is that social work as a field must more carefully consider how it can actively reach out and work in collaboration with public libraries on these overlapping broad social concerns. This could include interdisciplinary collaboration on coursework, practicum opportunities, research, and professional work.

6.2.3 Recommendations for research

To begin with, the majority of the literature on social conditions prompting public libraries to seek the skills of social workers is coming out of the library world. The number of publications from library researchers far outstrips those from social work. Moreover, at the time of writing, the literature review for the current study revealed no published empirical studies on the motivation for public libraries to engage social workers from Canadian perspectives. There has been a surge of grey literature on the topic, however, as is exemplified by the number of news articles covering the four cases. The very few peer-reviewed studies and peer-reviewed journal articles are American (Hines, 2015; Kelley et al., 2017; Luo et al., 2012), thus revealing an important gap that is waiting to be filled by Canadian social work researchers.

This exploratory study focused partly on public library motivations for including social workers in their operations and utilized case study methodology to approach the topic. There is substantial room for growth possible in this area. For instance, what are the perspectives of the

library users requiring and/or receiving social work support services? In addition, what might a participatory action research approach unearth that case study did not? The four libraries participating in this case study are located in urban context; another path of future research, therefore, exists in exploring the experiences of rural and Indigenous communities in the area of library social work.

6.3 Library social work practice

Research Question – What is the nature of social work practice in Canadian public libraries?

According to the current study's survey, the primary duties of Canadian library social workers are mainly resource supports and referrals; outreach; and community development and engagement. Social workers already working within libraries also provide support to library staff in assisting with challenging behaviours and work with security to develop solutions. The survey data indicated that advocacy, policy and research are the least common aspects of existing or desired library social work practice. In addition, the survey indicated that counselling could be beneficial in library-social work; it is not currently a focus based on the survey results and the cross-case analysis. The current study's multicase findings echoed the perspectives found in the preliminary national survey, but provided much richer information as to the characteristics and scope of the library social work taking place in their organizations.

Up to this point, there has been a dearth of literature on the nature of public library social work practice, especially in Canadian contexts. The literature review completed in tandem with the current study revealed only three published studies on library social work (Hines, 2015; Kelley et al., 2017; Luo et al., 2012), none of which included Canadian library social workers. These studies, along with the grey literature, primarily focused on reasons why the libraries were motivated to engage social workers along with a description of their models (as outlined in the

previous section). For example, the focus can be seen in journal article titles like “Determining the Need for Social Work Practice in a Public Library” and “Connecting Individuals With Social Services: The Library’s Role”, and “Social Workers in the Library: An Innovative Approach to Address Library Patrons’ Social Service Needs”. This suggests that the orientation of the research up to this point has been focused on the libraries and the complex needs of many library users rather than closer examinations of the nature of this newly emerging area of library social work practice.

The current study, therefore, has findings that could potentially fill this gap in two ways: it offers Canadian perspectives and experiences, and it provides data on the characteristics, roles, responsibilities, competencies, benefits, and challenges of library-based social work. Moreover, this study comes from a social work orientation rather than a library sciences orientation, which also potentially adds new information to the existing literature.

The current study asserts that variety, accessibility, and mobility are key characteristics of library social work practice within these four settings. The current study, much like the above literature on other social work library initiatives, found that supporting residents and library users with resources, referrals, and advocacy were primary duties, in addition to providing support and training to library staff. However, unlike the studies previously mentioned, the current study unearthed a richness of description.

From these descriptions within the current study, I propose labelling Canadian library-based social work taking place within these four public libraries as a hybridized practice in which a combination of clinical and community development work takes place. For this to happen successfully, the perspectives shared across cases is that BSW or MSW level of education would be most appropriate, along with the requirement to be registered with the relevant social work bodies

where appropriate. Similarly, in order to perform competent library social work, practitioners should have experience working with marginalized individuals, particularly in the area of homelessness, and be skilled at de-escalation, assessments, and interventions often with mental health and substance abuse factors.

Competencies of empathy and interpersonal communication were highlighted along with a nimble open-minded attitude and flexibility. The case analysis suggests that having social justice, AOP, and harm reduction approaches are also desired competencies. While the specialized skillset in working with marginalized populations, and competencies of empathy, communication skills, and passion for social justice were found within the existing literature on library social work (Hines, 2015; Green et al., Kelley et al. 2017), the current study diverged with its finding on the value of AOP and harm reduction orientations. Anti-oppressive practice, or AOP, is comprised of a variety of theories and approaches connected to social justice and social work (Turner, 2011). An AOP stance has core values that include equity, inclusion, empowerment, and community; recognition of the connection between personal problems and larger social issues; recognition that there is unequal distribution of power and resources that lead to oppression; and the belief in the transformative potential of social work as a result of working with diverse people and communities (Turner, 2011). It is interesting that despite national and international social work associations' inclusion of AOP as important to social work, this concept has not yet made it into the specific library social work literature.

Another theoretical approach arising as a theme in the current study that does not appear in the literature is the importance of library social workers adopting a harm reduction approach. This is an approach that strives to meet people where they are at during service provision. It refers to “strategies aimed at reducing the risks and harmful effects associated with substance abuse and

addictive behaviours ... In social services work, harm reduction approaches work to reduce harm, while complete abstinence may not be the goal” (Homeless Hub, 2017, para. 1). According to the current study, library social workers have as one of their foundational principles this outlook, which consists of pragmatism, humane values, focus on harms, balancing costs and benefits, and priority of immediate goals (Homeless Hub, 2017).

Also not yet found in the general literature to date on this emerging practice, library social workers in this study are found to be working on developing longer-term relationships with library users who require their services. This assists them in delivering in-house supports through discussions, problem solving and planning, advocacy, and supported referrals. Specifically, a unique aspect of the current study’s findings on library social work is the practice of supported referrals. Participants spoke of moving beyond brochures and resources to more active assistance when doing referrals, which in some cases went as far as accompanying their clients to appointments and coordinating wraparound services for individuals.

Another gap in the literature is detailed information on how social workers are interacting with library staff. This is something that the current study has unearthed based on the analysis of the four cases. Library social worker is a unique non-traditional practice that takes place in an interdisciplinary public environment. It is informed by the library’s broader mandate to serve all residents; as a result, library social workers are called upon to serve a multitude of individuals across sectors and social services, working in collaboration with library staff and other community partners. The current study’s findings show that the social workers worked alongside library staff to best assist library users, engage in outreach, and pursue mutually beneficial professional development.

A further finding on the nature of library social work not commonly found in the literature is how the library social workers in this study also used a significant part of their days

to network and liaise with community agencies in order to help create a safety net of consistent support to vulnerable residents. Building on the language used by participants, I suggest labelling this as a community connector role in which the library social workers work in tandem with community and municipal programs to fill in the gaps and cracks in the system. It is a holistic approach not limited by a particular social service mandate, target population, or other limitations typically found in social serving agencies. Moreover, the library social workers also engaged in what I call a free range type of practice in which they move throughout the city, building relationships with individuals, library staff, agencies, and municipal departments in order to connect residents in need to the existing community supports.

6.3.1 Implications for social work practice

The current study analyzed participant responses and documentation on perceived benefits to library social work practice for library users, library staff, community agencies, and even the overall community. They also named benefits to the field of social work through increased availability of practicum placements, creation of new social work perspectives and practice. These benefits have implications for future social work research, policy, and practice. If this study's findings, which are in line with emerging research in the area on successes of these initiatives (Kelley et al., 2017; Luo et al., 2012), then contributing to the development of this emerging field through faculty-library collaborations, interdisciplinary research and projects, contribution to evaluation of existing programs, and advocating for the creation and expansion of library social workers across Canada are recommended steps.

The current study additionally found some key challenges reported by the participants and found in the documentation. Primary among these includes struggles in capacity of the social worker to do the work due to high workloads, unrealistic expectations of staff and clients,

isolation, the pressures of developing new programs from the ground up with relatively little support, and doing front line and strategic planning work simultaneously. Lack of adequate social work supervision was also highlighted consistently as a major source of concern.

I highlight these two areas of struggle here because they have specific implications for the field of social work. Social work researchers, policy makers, and practitioners can at all levels turn toward our library social work peers. Participants frequently spoke about the lack of awareness and understanding from their fellow social workers in their communities and across Canada. Assisting library social workers to develop communities of practice and opportunities for supervision, for example, by opening up the support of university, regional, and national organizing bodies could be of critical importance.

Along these lines, one key recommendation would be to start by social work national professional and academic bodies to provide funding to support the creation of a community of practice for Canadian library social work. This could include a central digital hub of resources and a forum for supporting and sharing of ideas. Having dedicated staff assisting with the creation of this digital hub, along with organizing conferences to bring people together could enable this emerging trend to move to the next realm.

6.3.2 Implications for social work research

There are many implications for social work research in this young field. As mentioned in the previous section, the focus has mainly been from public library perspectives and on the need for social service support within libraries. As more public libraries embrace this trend and expand the scope of their work to include social work professionals within their libraries, the social work field must keep up with this new type of practice. What kind of clinical work is happening? What kind of

community development work is taking place? How does this type of social work practice compare to that found in more traditional environments?

Public libraries are not yet listed as a typical setting for Canadian social work practice (CASW, 2018). Kelley et al., (2017) asserted that despite increasing observations that urban libraries offer social embeddedness, urban sanctuaries, free space, and social/natural support systems (four concepts from Delgado's 1999 volume on non-traditional social work), there is almost no literature on library social work as its own field of practice; very little is known about the work being done by library social workers at this time. Therefore, a clear implication for social work is to begin paying attention to this new field that has been building for the past decade through research and collaborations.

One of the areas of recommendation emerging from the participants is the need to build a more robust body of descriptive, evaluative research. To date, there are only a handful of evaluations on existing public library-based social work programs and structures (Luo et al., 2012). Best practices based on empirical evidence and rigorous evaluations are much-needed. A finding from the current study is that research is critical when it comes to securing funding and when there is a fuller body of research, there will be improved buy-in from leadership.

6.4 Conclusion

This was an exploratory study – a piece of research whose aim was to provide insight into the emerging trend within Canadian public libraries to incorporate library social work, and present recommendation for practice and further research. In this study, the problem I tackled was how public libraries are grappling with the demands placed within their environments as a result of an increasing number of library users with needs that their traditional staff and approaches could not

adequately meet – and how social workers are involved in the movement toward better responses and better ways of supporting our communities’ most vulnerable citizens.

This thesis began with an introduction of the research topic of library social workers in Canada. Motivations to pursue this research, intersectionality and interdisciplinary approaches, and researcher worldviews were articulated. Following this came the literature review that informed the two main research questions, including key background information on the purpose and relevance of Canadian public libraries, and the challenges they face as more citizens with complex needs spend time in their branches. The literature review included an environmental scan on how these libraries are responding to the social concerns through incorporation of social workers. Next, case study methodology was presented and described, after which an overview of specific methods for this study was given. Ethical issues, trustworthiness, and limitations were provided. Subsequent chapters provided results from the survey, individual cases, and cross-case analysis. Direct quotes from the participants and documentation enabled thick, rich description of the motivations of public libraries to engage social workers and the nature of social work practice therein. The final chapter provided a discussion of key findings and the implications for social work research, policy, and practice.

To conclude, public libraries across Canada and the United States are looking to the field of social work as they seek to increase their social inclusion, decrease barriers, develop into community hubs, and meet the often complex needs of their marginalized residents. As the number of library social work initiatives, pilots, and full-fledged programs grows with each year, a new kind of social work practice is emerging: library social work. Not yet formally acknowledged by Canadian social work bodies, the current study strongly urges for social work researchers, policy makers, and practitioners turn their attention to this burgeoning movement

that encompasses so much of the social justice, anti-oppressive, poverty reduction, and quests to end homelessness that we care so much about.

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APPENDIX A

Online survey consent form

TITLE: Exploratory study on the nature of social work practice within Canadian public libraries

INVESTIGATORS: Elizabeth Schweizer (Master of Social Work thesis student); Dr. Jessica Ayala (Supervisor)

Thank you for your interest in this study. This consent form is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please ask. Take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information. You will receive a copy of this form.

BACKGROUND

Canadian public libraries report more clients with complex needs and multiple barriers accessing their branches, and the subsequent increasing demand for their connection to social services. Public libraries in Canadian communities have a unique opportunity to help address the social needs of their patrons, and social work is well positioned to make significant contributions in municipal library contexts. This mixed methods multiple case study will explore what is motivating Canadian public libraries to hire social workers, and what the nature of social work practice is within these library systems.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

There is a significant absence in the literature about where, when, why, and how municipal public libraries in Canada have incorporated social workers within their operations. This emerging trend is not yet being tracked or studied in a comprehensive way by social work or library associations. This study aims to fill that gap by providing case study research on Canadian public libraries who are at the forefront of this emerging new practice. Its objective is to put forward recommendations for practice and further research.

WHAT WOULD I HAVE TO DO?

You are invited to complete an online survey on your perspectives on the topic of social workers within public libraries. Completing this survey will take between 10-15 minutes approximately.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

There are no risks to your participating in this study. Your responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. They will not be shared with your colleagues or supervisors, or with other library personnel.

WILL I BENEFIT IF I TAKE PART?

If you agree to participate in this study, there may or may not be a direct benefit to you. Your participation in this study will enable knowledge sharing across social work and library science fields in North America.

DO I HAVE TO PARTICIPATE?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may decline to answer any survey questions, and withdraw from the study at any time by not clicking on the “done” option at the end of the survey and simply closing the browser window. While you are free to withdraw from this study at any time, you should be aware that it may not be possible to withdraw comments you have made once the results of this research have been published or otherwise disseminated.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING, OR DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR ANYTHING?

You will not be paid, or have to pay, for participating in this study.

WILL MY RECORDS BE KEPT PRIVATE?

The data you submit on the survey will be anonymous. The results of this research may also be published in professional journals or presented at conferences. Only aggregated findings illustrated at times by short, non-identifying quotes will be used.

SIGNATURES

Your signature on this form is not required. By clicking "yes" below, you are providing informed consent and this indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information provided regarding your participation in the research project and agree to participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities.

If you have further questions concerning your rights as a possible participant in this research, please contact:

Elizabeth Schweizer, MSW Thesis Student

Dr. Jessica Ayala (Supervisor)

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a possible participant in this research, or research in general, please contact the Chair of the Conjoint Health Research Ethics Board, University of Calgary at 403-220-7990. The University of Calgary Conjoint Health Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

APPENDIX B

Case Consent Form

TITLE: Exploratory study on the nature of social work practice within Canadian public libraries

INVESTIGATORS: Elizabeth Schweizer (Master of Social Work thesis student); Dr. Jessica Ayala (Supervisor)

Thank you for your interest in this study. This consent form is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please ask. Take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information. You will receive a copy of this form.

BACKGROUND

Canadian public libraries report more clients with complex needs and multiple barriers accessing their branches, along with the subsequent increasing demand for their connection to social services. Public libraries in Canadian communities have a unique opportunity to help address the social needs of their patrons, and social work is well positioned to make significant contributions in municipal library contexts. This mixed methods multiple case study will explore what is motivating Canadian public libraries to hire social workers, and what the nature of social work practice is within these library systems.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

There is a significant absence in the literature about where, when, why, and how municipal public libraries in Canada have incorporated social workers within their operations. This emerging trend is not yet being tracked or studied in a comprehensive way by social work or library associations. This study aims to fill that gap by providing case study research on Canadian public libraries who are at the forefront of this emerging new practice. Its objective is to put forward recommendations for practice and further research.

WHAT WOULD I HAVE TO DO?

The case study will involve two elements. The first consists of individual semi-structured telephone interviews of approximately one hour with the social worker(s) and a key librarian manager who works with the social worker. The second is a review of relevant documents such as job descriptions, program overviews, or annual reports that the library is comfortable sharing. Data gathering will take place over the next two months.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

There are no risks to your participating in this study. Interviewer responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. They will not be shared with your colleagues or supervisors, or with other library personnel.

WILL I BENEFIT IF I TAKE PART?

If you agree to participate in this study, there may or may not be a direct benefit to you. Your participation in this study will enable knowledge sharing across social work and library science fields in North America.

DO I HAVE TO PARTICIPATE?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from this study, all previously collected data will be destroyed and will not be used in any way. While you are free to withdraw from this study at any time, you should be aware that it may not be possible to withdraw comments you have made once the results of this research have been published or otherwise disseminated.

WHAT ELSE DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

Once interviews and document review have concluded and responses have been transcribed, you may be asked to verify the accuracy of the initial analysis. Your participation in this aspect of the study is also voluntary.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING, OR DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR ANYTHING?

You will not be paid, or have to pay, for participating in this study.

WILL MY INTERVIEW AND SURVEY DATA BE KEPT PRIVATE?

All information obtained during this study will be kept private, and stored in a secured password-protected computer only accessible by the researcher. Any identifying information will be kept separate from other study materials. All data will be anonymized and the library will not be mentioned by name unless you would like to it to be. You can indicate your interest in having your library named in the next section. Your name and the names of any people or organizations you mention will not be included in the audio file names or the interview transcripts. Quotes from your interview may be used in writing up the results of this research.

Audio recordings, transcripts and survey data will be destroyed within five years after the completion of this study.

*** In some instances, libraries would prefer to be named as one of the participating cases. Please indicate your preference by checking the appropriate box.**

- ☐ Yes, I would like my library system to be identified by name.
- ☐ No, I do not want my library system to be identified by name.

SIGNATURES

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding your participation in the research project and agree to participate as a participant. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact:

Elizabeth Schweizer, MSW Graduate Student

Dr. Jessica Ayala (Supervisor)

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a possible participant in this research, or research in general, please contact the Chair of the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board, University of Calgary at 403-220-7990.

Participant's Name

Signature and Date

Researcher/Delegate's Name

Signature and Date

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

A signed copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide: Semi-structured telephone interviews with social workers

Research Questions: What is motivating Canadian public libraries to employ social workers? What is the nature of social work practice within these libraries?

Interview Questions:

1. I'm interested in learning about your social work practice within this public library system. What kind of work do you do? (Approximately how many social workers are employed? What are the primary duties of the social workers? Where do you fit in the overall structure?)
2. In your understanding, what conditions brought about the creation of your position?
3. How have you gone about envisioning, planning and implementing your work?
4. Tell me about the key relationships or partnerships that are important to the success of your work. (Potential follow-up: What are they and how have they been created?)
5. What do you see as the benefits of public libraries employing social workers? (What kind of social work would be most beneficial within the library where you work?)
6. What are the challenges of having social workers on staff?
7. What do you think would make your work even more effective?
8. How do you evaluate your work?
9. If other public libraries wanted to employ social workers and came to you for your advice, what would you tell them?
10. In your opinion, what would an ideal model or framework for social work within public libraries be?
11. What do you think are important social work competencies and personal characteristics of social workers employed within public libraries?
12. What has your overall experience in this role and setting been?
13. How much do you agree with this statement: Social workers could make significant contributions to the work of Canadian public libraries (strongly disagree, disagree, neither, agree, strongly agree).
14. Is there anything else you'd like to add or elaborate on?

APPENDIX D

Interview Guide: Semi-structured telephone interviews with librarians

Research Questions: What is motivating Canadian public libraries to employ social workers? What is the nature of social work practice within these libraries?

Interview Questions:

1. I'm interested in learning about your perspective of social work practice within this public library system. What kind of work is taking place? (Approximately how many social workers are employed? What are the primary duties of the social workers?)
2. In your understanding, what conditions brought about the creation of the social work position in the library?
3. How have you gone about envisioning, planning and implementing the social worker position within the library?
4. Tell me about the key relationships or partnerships that are important to the success of the social work role in the library. (Potential follow-up: What are they and how have they been created?)
5. What do you see as the benefits of public libraries employing social workers? (What kind of social work would be most beneficial within the library where you work?)
6. What are the challenges of having social workers on staff?
7. What do you think would make your work even more effective?
8. How do you evaluate this work?
9. If other public libraries wanted to employ social workers and came to you for your advice, what would you tell them?
10. In your opinion, what would an ideal model or framework for social work within public libraries be?
11. What do you think are important social work competencies and personal characteristics of social workers employed within public libraries?
12. How much do you agree with this statement: Social workers could make significant contributions to the work of Canadian public libraries (strongly disagree, disagree, neither, agree, strongly agree).
13. Is there anything else you'd like to add or elaborate on?

APPENDIX E

Individual case study data sources for document analysis

Case	Sources
Thunder Bay Public Library	<p>Document analysis was done on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>CBC</i> news article from October 4, 2016 on the partnership entitled “Pilot program brings social worker to Thunder Bay library” • 2016 annual report produced by Thunder Bay’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee • TBPL’s 2012-2016 Strategic Plan • Information from TBPL’s website
Kitchener Public Library	<p>Document analysis was done on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practicum placement description from the university • <i>CBC</i> news article from January 15, 2017 on the pilot MSW internship entitled “You can now ‘borrow’ a social worker at Kitchener Public Library” • <i>Waterloo Region Record</i> news article from December 2016 on the same MSW internship pilot entitled “Kitchener Public Library puts a social worker on the shelf” • KPL’s 2017-2020 Strategic Plan • KPL’s 2016 annual report (most current available on website)
Mississauga Public Library	<p>Document analysis was done on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Globe and Mail</i> article from August 4, 2017 entitled “Amid growing demand, GTA libraries are helping to fill a social-services gap” • <i>Toronto Star</i> article from July 26, 2017 entitled “Mississauga library receives federal funding to help fight homelessness” • MPL’s 2018-2021 Business Plan; a Powerpoint presentation done by the pilot leadership team to the Regional Leadership Team in November 14, 2017 entitled “Innovative Solutions to Homelessness Pilot Project Update” • Documents from two pilot project planning sessions that involved strategic thinking to develop a shared vision for the project and identify pillars on which to build the project work plan (September 2017)
Edmonton Public Library	<p>Document analysis was done on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome and Summative Evaluation Final Project Report on pilot, produced on February 24, 2015 • EPL’s Annual Report 2016 and 2013 • EPL’s 2014-2018 Strategic Goals and 2017-2018 Business Plan • EPL’s 2016-2018 Operating Budget Report • EPL’s Community Outreach Services web page, including transcripts from two videos on this page of the first social workers in the pilot, three clients, and a youth justice worker • EPL’s Community-Led Service Philosophy Toolkit (2013); EPL’s website page on “Community-Led Service Philosophy” • EPL’s Community-Led Handbook” (2014) • <i>Alberta Views</i> article published in April 2013 entitled “Beyond Books: Edmonton reinvents the library’s purpose” • University of Alberta’s Faculty of Education magazine <i>Illuminate</i> article published on May 8, 2017 entitled “EPL head’s community-led approach

	<p>puts the public in ‘public library’”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Library Journal</i> article published June 11, 2014 entitled “Library of the Year: Edmonton Public Library, Transformed by Teamwork”
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