Services and Staffing Practices within Academic Libraries Serving College of Osteopathic Medicine Programs: A Mixed Methods Study

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OBJECTIVES

- To conduct a systematic assessment of services and staffing practices within academic libraries serving College of Osteopathic Medicine programs.
- To provide a description of core library services, detect trends in services being offered through comparisons across osteopathic medical schools, justify the need for additional services and staffing, and assist leadership within developing medical schools in planning for their future academic health sciences libraries.

METHODS

Mixed Methods Study, pursued through three phases:

- PHASE ONE: obtained contact information for the library directors, or leaders serving them, for all osteopathic medical schools in the United States, via publicly-facing websites.
- PHASE TWO: conducted a literature review which informed the design of a survey which was sent to the library directors or leaders identified in Phase One.
- PHASE THREE: seven selected COM library directors were interviewed by phone. Interviews consisted of five, in-depth questions that related to services that have increased the library's visibility, motivation to offer new services, adequacy of current staffing levels, and competencies needed for serving in these new roles.

RESULTS

PHASE TWO: There were 30 out of a possible 35 completed COM Libraries Services & Staffing Surveys returned, for an 86% return rate. Figure 1 identifies the top services being offered and the percentage of libraries that offer them. Figure 2 represents COM library staffing per student served. Each dot represents one library, and data labels indicate the library personnel (any type) FTE per 1,000 students. Figure 3 represents the number of professional librarians as a function of staff size.

RESULTS

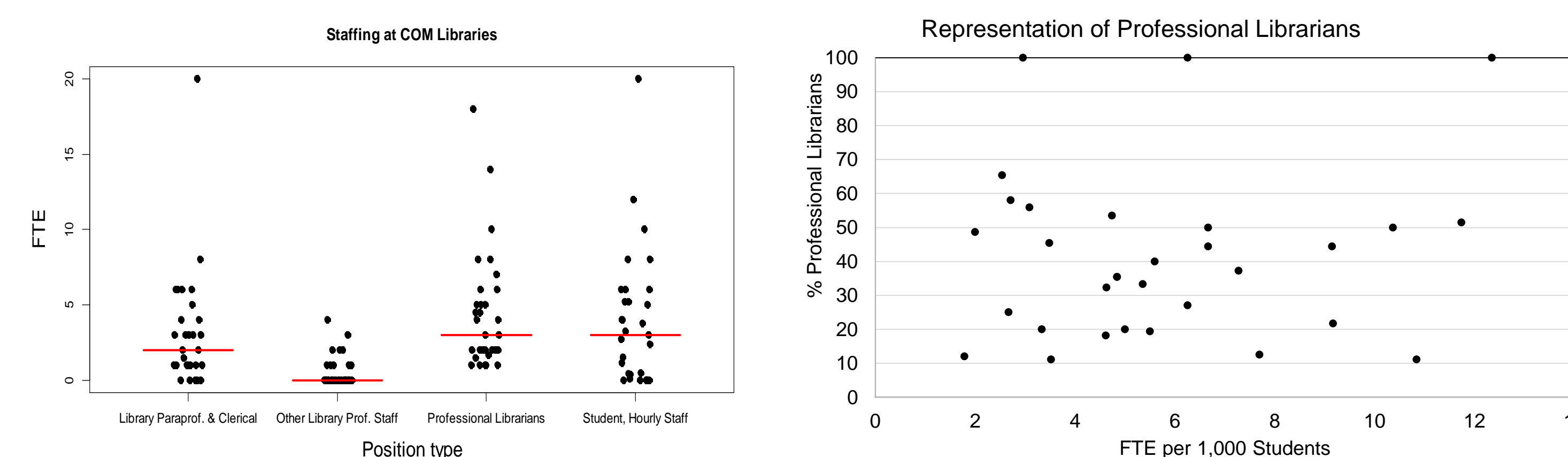Figure 1: Percent of respondents (n=30) offering types of library services

Figure 2: Staffing at COM Libraries. Each jittered dot represents one library, and red lines show the median FTE.
Figure 3: Representation of professional librarians as a function of staff size.

PHASE THREE: The phone interviews revealed several themes related to the libraries' physical space and availability (hours, space, access, study) services provided (EBM information, student contact), populations served (faculty, students), and necessary staff competencies (teaching, IT expertise, copyright, scholarly publishing, biostatistics, and systematic reviews).

Figure 4: Representation of services that have been successful in increasing the libraries' visibility.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Participants will be able to use this data to make a case for new resources, services, and staffing.
2. Participants will be able to share this data with medical administrators in order to develop more productive collaborations with the library, in areas such as curriculum-integrated instruction, research development, and scholarly communication.
3. Participants will be able to share this data with leaders within developing medical schools, in order to plan for an appropriate budget and staffing within their future academic libraries.

CONCLUSIONS

This study provides a systematic comparison of services and staffing within academic health sciences libraries serving College of Osteopathic Medicine programs in the U.S. Library directors, not only those affiliated with new medical schools, but also with long-standing, and more traditional schools, can use this data to make a case for new resources, services, or staffing. In addition, medical school administrators may find opportunities in this study's results for more productive collaborations with the library, in areas such as curriculum-integrated instruction, research development, and scholarly publishing. Finally, leaders within developing medical schools will become better informed about current library services being provided, and staffing trends, in order to plan for an appropriate budget and staffing for their future health sciences libraries.

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