STRESS AND BURNOUT AMONG REFERENCE LIBRARIANS IN SLOVENIA
A survey of public, academic, and special reference librarians

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Abstract:

The purpose of the thesis is to find out if and how much reference librarians in public, academic, and special libraries in Slovenia are stressed when performing their work. The areas of reference work that cause the most stress and also the most used strategies of stress reduction will be examined. In addition, library managers will be studied to find out if they find reference work stressful and if they contribute to reduction or even elimination of reference librarians’ level of stress. According to the obtained results, most reference librarians have other assignments in addition to reference work and are satisfied with their occupation. They do experience stress at work, only a few do not. In general, they think that too much stress can lead to burnout. Library managers are of the same opinion as for the stressfulness of the reference work goes and they do educate their reference librarians on overcoming stress and burnout. Potential solutions for reduction of stress level in reference work are additional education on strategies of stress reduction (both, library managers and reference librarians should be educated), on improving the relationships between them, on better work organization, lessening of workload and less bureaucracy.
Naslov: STRES IN IZGORELOST REFERENČNIH KNJIŽNIČARJEV V SLOVENIJI: Raziskava med referenčnimi knjižničarji iz splošnih, visokošolskih/univerzitetnih in specialnih knjižnic
Ključne besede: stres, izgorelost, referenčni knjižničarji, splošne knjižnice, visokošolske/univerzitetne knjižnice, specialne knjižnice, Slovenija

Izvleček:
Namen magistrskega dela je ugotoviti, koliko stresa doživljajo pri svojem delu referenčni knjižničarji iz splošnih, univerzitetnih/višokošolskih in specialnih knjižnic v Sloveniji. Raziskala sem področja referenčnega dela, ki najbolj prispevajo k stresu, prav tako tudi najpogostejše strategije, ki pomagajo pri odpravi oz. zmanjševanju stresa. Zajima me tudi, kakšno je mnenje vodij knjižnic o stresnosti referenčnega dela in kako oni prispevajo k zmanjševanju stopnje stresa pri referenčnih knjižničarjih. Rezultati raziskave kažejo, da večina referenčnih knjižničarjev opravlja poleg referenčnega dela tudi druga opravila, kot na primer izposojo in katalogizacijo. Večina knjižničarjev je zadovoljna s svojim poklicem (delom). Pri svojem delu pogosto doživljajo stres, samo nekaj knjižničarjev je zatrdilo, da ga ne doživlja. Prevladuje splošno mnenje, da lahko preveč stresa pripelje do izgorelosti. Vodje knjižnic so enakega mnenja glede stresnosti referenčnega dela kot referenčni knjižničarji in nekaj več kot polovica vprašanih svoje zaposlene tudi izobražuje na področju premagovanja stresa ter izgorelosti. Za zmanjšanje stresnosti referenčnega dela predlagam nadaljnje izobraževanje na tem področju (tako referenčnih knjižničarjev kot vodij knjižnic), delo na izboljšanju odnosov med zaposlenimi, boljši organizaciji dela, enakomerno ne porazdelitvi delovnih nalog in zmanjšanju količine birokratskih opravil.
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>SBS</td>
<td>Staff Burnout Scale</td>
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<tr>
<td>MBI</td>
<td>Maslach Burnout Inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BI</td>
<td>Bibliographic Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CeZaR</td>
<td>Center za razvoj knjižnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAS</td>
<td>General Adaptation Syndrome</td>
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</table>
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1 INTRODUCTION

Librarianship has always been ranked as a ‘semi-profession’ and librarians had to battle with this etiquette throughout the years. Librarianship and stress or burnout did not go together in the mind of the public. Everybody thought that being a librarian is the easiest job under the sun. Even today, when the nature of librarianship and libraries has changed the opinion of the public has not.

Few decades ago when burnout syndrome was not so widely spread as it is today, it was assumed that only professionals that work with people are at risk to burnout. Individuals who work with other people were then regarded as professionals in health care, social care, teachers. Librarians (especially reference librarians) were not considered at that time, although they work with people on a daily basis.

The truth is that the job of a librarian has become very demanding and stressful in the last few decades. Here we are going to look into the world of reference librarians. The reference librarian is usually the first librarian the user comes in contact with when visiting the library. My mission here is to find out if the reference librarians are stressed when doing their work and if they are in danger of burning out. And if they are, what are the countermeasures to reduce stress and burnout to make their life better.

Reference librarians in three types of libraries will be studied (except school libraries) and then the comparison will be made to find out, which reference librarians work in the most stressful environment. Les Krantz (as cited in Kniffel, 1999) rated librarians at the bottom of his scale of 250 stressful jobs. And the view of the public on the librarian’s job has not changed much since then. Many people say when they hear that someone works in a library as a reference librarian, that this is a very non-stressful job. With today’s changed working environment reference librarians also started to experience stress and burnout. What is the cause of reference librarian’s stress and burnout will be explained in the following chapters.

First, we must also explain what reference work, stress and burnout are to know what exactly happens when these items collide. And last but not least the
solutions will be given on how to minimize or even avoid (if that is even possible) stress and burnout among reference librarians.

1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Stress is constantly present in our life. It can be found in our social life, in our private life, in the environment and also in the workplace. Occupational stress tends to be the most powerful stress amongst all. Professions, where people come in contact with other people (except co-workers) can be very stressful. Being a reference librarian is one of those occupations.

As it is known, the primary duty of a reference service in every library is to assist the user so that he/she can find the needed information as quickly as possible. Reference librarians are therefore under constant stress to satisfy the needs of the user in the best way they can. In some libraries there are librarians who work only in reference service and in other libraries the librarians must do all the work by themselves, including the reference work.

Constant stress can affect the work of reference librarians, their productivity, mental and physical abilities and also their social life. If the librarian is often on sick leave that also has an effect on the library as an institution.

1.2 OBJECT OF THE RESEARCH

The objects of the research of my master’s thesis are reference librarians in Slovenian libraries (public, academic and special libraries), their work environment and their countermeasures to stress. Librarians in public, academic and special libraries in Slovenia will be included in the survey. According to CeZaR in 2013 there were 58 public libraries (without 2 public libraries in Klagenfurt and Trieste), 84 academic libraries and 112 special libraries in Slovenia. All of them were included in the research.
1.3 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of the thesis is to find out what stress and burnout actually are and how they can be correlated with reference librarianship. The next step is to examine how reference librarians in Slovenia cope with stress and burnout due to working with users, ever-changing working environment, technology, available resources etc. First, I would like to find out whether reference work is stressful and to identify causes of stress and burnout and finally suggest strategies for managing stress and avoiding burnout.

1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

When scanning and reading the literature about stress, burnout and reference service, the following research questions were brought up:
RQ 1: Do reference librarians work under stress?
RQ 2: Are reference librarians, whose primary occupation is not just reference work, more stressed than their colleagues in other libraries who work just in reference service?
RQ 3: How do reference librarians cope with stress?
RQ 4: Is working with users the most stressful part of the reference librarian’s work?
RQ 5: Are there cases of burnt-out reference librarians?
RQ 6: Do the library managers help preventing their reference librarians from being too stressed and burnt-out?
RQ 7: Do library managers educate their employees on how to overcome stress?
RQ 8: Are older reference librarians less prone to stress and burnout?
RQ 9: Can work related stress lead to burnout?
RQ 10: Do the greatest differences between reference librarians’ and library managers’ opinion regarding stress occur in public libraries?
RQ 11: Do reference librarians in public libraries experience the highest level of stress among all reference librarians?
2 SURVEY OF THE PUBLISHED RESEARCH

2.1 STRESS AND BURNOUT

Stress and burnout have nowadays become a problem that can be found almost everywhere across the globe. Changes such as increased commercial competition, tendering for contracts, outsourcing of jobs, downsizing and restructuring, short-term contract work, increasing pressure on employees and in the last years economic crisis have left their mark on the libraries (Pantry, 2008). Add to these changes also fast changes in the technology and reference work in a library gets a very different meaning as in the past.

2.1.1 Stress

There are many different definitions for this phenomenon. The most common definition is that stress is actually a way how the body reacts on the stimulants from the environment. Human body has an in-build program for adjustment to the new circumstances in the environment (Inštitut za razvoj človeških virov, 2015). How the person will react depends on what kind of personality he/she has, from his/hers experience in life and from his/hers well-being.

Ule writes in 1998 (as cited in Lemut, 2002) that stress is a discrepancy between our perception of what is required and what kind of abilities we have to deal with the given situation. Stress can have a big influence on our life on a psychological and a physical level. If we experience low levels of stress every now and then, it can be very stimulating for our life because we are forced to move forward. If we experience high level of stress on a daily basis, it can soon be very harmful for our body and health because we function at 120% all the time and we are slowly burning our ‘fuel’. High level of stress can soon show itself as negative emotions, feelings of strain and pressure, of anxiety, overall irritability, feeling of insecure, nervousness, social withdrawal, loss of appetite etc. If we do not do anything about that, we can soon burnout.
Experts such as Hiebert (2006) and Schmiedel (2011) believe that people strive for balance in their lives. If there is a balance between demands and resources that a person has for dealing with those demands, the levels of stress are low. On the other hand, if the resources for dealing with some demand are inadequate, the person will experience high levels of stress.

It is commonly known that people experience a lot of stress at work. Such stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work (Healthy and Safety Executive, 2016).

Figure 1 shows how a person who is not stimulated enough and stimulated too much will perform poor. There is quite a challenge in finding the right level of stimulation (or stress) that will give optimal performance.

Figure 1. Stress and performance (Gorey, 2015)
2.1.1.1 Types of stress

There are quite a few types of stress. In general, we can divide stress into two groups (Plevel and Zabukovec, 2006):

- Positive stress (eustress) – a person finds himself in a manageable situation and has therefore positive feelings and emotions when he is performing his work. This kind of stress is very good for the person.
- Negative stress (distress) – when a person is faced with a situation or work challenge above his abilities. He feels fear, uncertainty or despair and wants to escape. Such stress is very harmful for the body and if a person is under such stress a lot, the consequences of stress will soon be visible. A person would have health problems and be on sick-leave very often. In the worst case scenario, if nothing is being done to prevent such stress, it will build up and the body will eventually shut down.

According to American Psychological Association (2016), there are three types of stress:

- acute stress (it comes from demands and pressures of the recent past and anticipated demands and pressures of the near future; it is the most common and it is short term; it can be thrilling and exciting),
- episodic acute stress (some people suffer acute stress frequently, they always live in chaos and crisis, are always in a rush, always late; another form of this type of stress is ceaseless worry, where people worry about everything, see danger everywhere) and
- chronic stress (this kind of stress wears a person out; it lasts a long time, destroys body and mind; a person does not see a light at the end of the tunnel; such stress for instance is the stress of poverty, being in a despised job or have a dysfunctional family).

We can see that stress is caused by all types of changes in a person’s life. These changes are called stressors.
2.1.1.2 Stressors

Stressor is a physical, psychological or social force that puts real or perceived demands on the body, emotions, mind or spirit of an individual. It can be also described as a biological, chemical or physical factor that can cause temporary or permanent harm to an ecosystem, environment or an organism (BussinessDictionary, 2016). Types of stressors are (American Institute for Preventive Medicine, 2016):

- ripple effect stressors (one occurrence of such stressor can cause other daily stressors, such stressor is for example divorce)
- chronic stressors (long-term stressful situations that have no resolution in sight, for example constant deadlines or overcrowded working conditions)
- acute stressors (short-term stressful situations that will soon be resolved, for example short term illness)
- not knowing stressors (for example when traveling in an unfamiliar city or being new on the job)
- personal or non-personal stressors (are caused by things that cannot be controlled, for example being stuck in a snowstorm)
- trigger stressors (reminders of past stress that produce renewed stress response, for example when watching workmen on a tall building reminds a person of his/her fear of heights)
- daily hassles (for example concern about health, weight, money, etc.)

We see that there are quite a lot of factors in this classification that influence a person’s well-being. Renar (2011) writes about three groups of stressors:

- background stressors (such as noise in the workplace, inadequate living conditions, being in a traffic jam, etc.)
• personal stressors (stressful situations in personal life that we cannot avoid, such as illness, fear of losing a job, fear of losing your social status and other) and
• cataclysmic stressors (natural disasters such as fire, earthquakes or floods).

Hiebert (2006) on the other hand divides stressors only into two big groups:
• physical stressors and
• emotional stressors.

When a person is physically active (for instance is engaged in sports) we can talk about physical stressors. In some instances, physical activity can exceed a person’s physical capability, which can cause a great deal of stress. Emotional stress on the other hand is strongly related to cognitive appraisal (Hiebert, 2006). It is about people’s appraisal of the nature and intensity of the demands, their resources for dealing with the demands and the consequences of that situation.

The most applicable division here would be from Kompare et al. (as cited in Renar, 2011) where stressors are divided into four big groups:
• environmental stressors (such as noise, floods, wars etc.)
• work or school related stressors (work overload, lack of work duties, study program that is too extensive for a student etc.)
• sudden life changes (divorce, death, birth etc.) and
• every day worries (rush, driving to work, over consuming of food and drink etc.)

In this thesis the emphasis will be on the work related stressors.

2.1.1.3 Work related stressors

Out of all types of stressors the stressors that are related to work are the most common and almost all people come in contact with one or more of them at least once in life. A workplace that is not well designed, managed and organized can cause a great deal of stress. The stressor areas can be (Better Health Channel, 2016):
• organization culture
• bad management practices
• job content and demands
• physical work environment
• relationships at work
• change management
• lack of support
• role conflict and
• psychological trauma

2.1.1.3.1 Organization culture

Organization culture is a system of shared assumptions, values and beliefs, which governs how people behave in an organization. These shared values have a strong influence on the people in the organization and dictate how they dress, act and perform their jobs. Every organization develops and maintains a unique culture, which provides guidelines and boundaries for the behaviour of the members of the organization (Study.com, 2016). If the culture and the atmosphere in the organization are positive, employees experience low levels of stress and therefore can contribute to the organization’s image, growth and even higher profit. The opposite is negative organization culture. Ehrlichman (2013) states 6 reasons why an organization can have a bad culture:

• too much gossip will undermine every good organization’s culture,
• bad habits of leadership team such as sloppiness or bad temper,
• the managers are not willing to know what is happening on the front lines and are not willing to work hard,
• competition among employees,
• no cooperation among employees and
• lack of organization’s spirit - employees do not believe in the organization and do not care about the organization’s mission.

All organizations must strive for having the best culture, which will contribute to the organizations and their employees’ health and well-being.
2.1.1.3.2 Bad management practices

Schiller (2012) and Carruthers (2008) write about bad management practices and habits of bad managers. They agree within five bad managers’ habits or practices, which are:

- disorganization and indecision (if there is an obstacle they will rather leave it be than find a solution for overcoming it)
- management by fear (for example bad managers bully their employees)
- poor communication (the managers do not listen to the employees, they do not take the words of the employees into consideration and act on their own)
- avoiding conflicts (avoiding conflicts is in general a good thing but in this case if it comes to a conflict the manager rather escapes than confronts the situation)
- not walking the talk (the manager says one thing and acts contrary to his words)

Schiller (2012) states four additional bad management practices:

- spreadsheet terrorism or management by numbers (employees must write a lot of reports about the business which slows them down and they are not productive)
- divide and conquer (the managers goal is to set a variance among the employees so that he/she can rule)
- featurism over quality (for instance if the deadline is too short that has an impact on quality)
- blaming organization’s culture instead of finding solutions for the problem.

Carruthers (2008) writes about five bad management habits:

- manager trusts no one
- discourtesy (manager does not treat employees as human beings, for example he does not greet them when he comes to work)
- work place politics and inequity (employees must be treated equal)
· pride (the managers are too proud to ask questions if they do not know something)
· lying (managers lie to employees in order to avoid difficult situations).

Here we have listed only those bad management practices and habits that occur most frequently.

2.1.1.3.3 Job content and demands

The next work related stressor is job content and demands. Job content are tasks that an employee must fulfil in order to do his job. Job content can sometimes be monotone, under-stimulated, a person must perform meaningless tasks or there is a lack of variety of tasks (World Health Organization, 2016).

Demands on the other hand are physical and emotional stressors like time pressure, a heavy workload, a stressful working environment, role ambiguity, emotional labour and poor relationships (MindTools, 2016). An employee has too much or too little to do, he must work under time pressure, there is some emotional pressure, etc. Stress increases if people are in a constant hurry, are always behind schedule and on top of all they worry about the deadlines.

2.1.1.3.4 Physical work environment

Stress is a cumulative process. Although physical work environment by itself is not so stressful, in the right combination with other stressors can be very aggravating. It can contribute to high levels of stress. Melendez, Guzman, Richardson and West (as cited in Caputo, 1991) list physical factors that have an influence on work related stress. Too much noise, poor or too much lighting, high or low temperature, poor ventilation, people have no privacy, too much interruption, uncomfortable seats are just a few of them.
2.1.1.3.5 Relationships at work

There is a great importance to have a good working relationship with other co-workers. If people are honest, avoid gossip, and try to compliment others when they do well, this only contributes to a good work relationship and company climate. It can happen that two co-workers cannot work with each other, because they do not like each other. Then they must try to overcome this obstacle in order to work well together. They must find the things they have in common.

Good working relationship is based on the following characteristics (MindTools, 2016):

- trust
- mutual respect
- mindfulness (people stand behind their words and actions)
- welcoming diversity (different people have different opinion and their opinion is taken into consideration when making a decision)
- open communication (people must communicate with each other and be honest, not hold thing back or lie).

It is not enough that only employees try to have good work relationships with each other, the management must also create a positive atmosphere in that kind of way so that employees see that they can trust and respect the managers and that they are honest. This works both ways of course.

During crisis it is hard to maintain such a positive company atmosphere. There is constant battle for survival, usually the main goal is to have as much profit as possible and nobody is looking after the employees. The next thing is that competition and short-term values of the management increase secrecy. Management does not share critical information with the employees, which causes loss of confidence and trust in the management. The third thing is mutual respect. If a company is oriented only towards the end result, the employees have a feeling they are being exploited because they are valued only for how they can fit the organizational plan (Maslach and Leiter, 2002). Such undermining of company atmosphere creates stress and is in long term harmful for the employees and their health.
2.1.1.3.6 Change management

There are different ways how to cope with change in a company. Sirkin, Keenan and Jackson (2005) write that every manager has his own ways of dealing with change and that depends on his knowledge and previous experience. Different managers will use different approaches not just for the entire company but also for the different parts of the company and that does not mean that they will succeed in the end. The authors mentioned above determine that in most organizations two out of three transformation initiatives fail.

They distinguish between soft and hard issues of change management. Soft issues are organization’s culture, leadership and motivation. Hard issues are project duration, performance integrity (i.e. ability to complete the project on time), the commitment of managers and the employees and the additional effort that employees must make to cope with the change. There must be an emphasis on the hard issues of change because they can be measured in direct or indirect ways, businesses can influence those issues quickly and can easily communicate their importance. The soft issues are also important but they do not directly influence the outcomes of change programs.

Change can be a tough process. If the wrong approach is used that can bring a lot of stress to both managers and employees.

2.1.1.3.7 Lack of support

Maslach and Leiter (2002) think that the disintegration of the working community brought the change into the personal contact among the employees. More and more companies are focused only on the profit and not on people anymore, people have only temporary jobs, do not feel safe, and cannot create a life they want. Such uncertainty brings stress and people do not communicate with each other as they used to and the result is the lack of support from co-workers and managers.

The second thing is that there is no sense of community and everybody looks out just for themselves. In such working groups there is no teamwork and no
sense of helping each other (Maslach and Leiter, 2002). People are only in each other’s way and such climate brings only conflicts and arguing. The consequence is that people become angry, agitated and stressed.

2.1.1.3.8 Role conflict

Daniels, Justice, Gold and other authors (as cited in Caputo, 1991) write about two types of role conflict which cause stress and in worst cases also burnout. They are unsuitability between the employee and the job and conflict between the values of the employee and the demands of the job.

Those two types are the most common but there are also other types of role conflict. For example, it can happen that an employee is working under two supervisors and they have different views of what and how the job should be done. Another possibility is when two employees are sharing a job and they have different goals, expectations and philosophy.

Caputo (1991) emphasizes that role conflict of a temporary nature exists in librarianship where librarians must suppress their feelings and thoughts in order to meet the needs of the patrons, especially if both, the requirements and the patrons are a little bit strange.

2.1.1.3.9 Psychological trauma

Such trauma can bring a lot of harm to a person’s body and mind. Examples of trauma related to work are when someone loses a job or someone dies at a workplace. Such events leave physiological, emotional and behavioural imprints on the person. If traumatic event is too intense, it can lead to a posttraumatic stress disorder, which can have negative impact on every aspect of person's life.
2.1.2 Burnout

Lavrič and Novak (as cited in Žveglič, 2012) write that the problem with the stressors is that they pile together and the final effect can have a much bigger impact on the person. Too much negative stressors in a period of time will cause constant stress which can lead to burnout. Smith et al. (as cited in Žveglič, 2012) state that the difference between the person under stress and the person who is burnt-out is that the person under stress is consciously aware of his/her situation, while the burnt-out person is not aware of being burnt-out.

2.1.2.1 What is burnout?

One of the first definitions of burnout by Maslach and Jackson (as cited in Maslach, 1993, p. 20) is that “burnout is a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity”. From this definition we can see that work can be the main cause for the burnout. Potter (1996, p. 1) states that “job burnout is an impairment of motivation to work, resulting in a growing inability to mobilize interest and abilities”. Within the complexity of the world today, it begins with small warning signs such as feelings of frustration, emotional outbursts, sense of alienation, substandard performance and increased use of drugs and alcohol. However, burnout cannot be caused only by work. There are also other factors such as everyday life or family.

Burnout is often seen as the upper level of stress. If we experience high stress all the time, the body can soon no longer function normally. Schmiedel (2011, p. 14) defined burnout as “one of the forms of protest against imbalance in the body”. As seen in Figure 2, burnout is a cross-section of stress, depression and exhaustion.
2.1.2.2 Stages of burnout

Researchers have divided the process of burnout into phases. The best known is the three level model of burnout by Hans Selye (as cited in Schmiedel, 2011 and Lemut, 2002). This model is also called General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) consisting of three phases (StressLess Living, 2014):

- alarm reaction or activation
- resistance and
- exhaustion.

The model is presented in Figure 3.
The Figure 3 shows the process of burnout (StressLess Living, 2014):

![Figure 3. General Adaptation Syndrome](image)

2.1.2.2.1 Alarm reaction or activation phase

When the stressor occurs, the first phase sets in. Schmiedel (2011) states that the person is in a shock and does not know what to do at the first moment. He experiences a fight or flight response. This response is legacy of our ancestors: if they wanted to survive, they had to react very quickly and only the fittest survived. The body increases the level of stress hormones in the blood, the human starts to sweat and shake, his heart is pounding, he is restless and wants to talk all the time, bites his nails and is preparing to cope with the stressor.

If the stressor does not last long the body quickly finds its balance again and starts to regenerate. This is the usual way of how it should be. Our ancestors knew how to relax which is the main difference between then and now. The modern human is constantly tense, always in the fight or flight mode, does not know how or does not have time to regenerate and is therefore more prone to burnout.

If the first phase is not long and we successfully recuperate after the stressor is gone, this is harmless for the body. However, if the stressor continues, the second phase will start.
2.1.2.2.2 Resistance phase

When this phase sets in, the body is trying to adapt to the stressor, the hormone levels are still high and also all the symptoms from the first phase are present. In addition, the physical symptoms of this phase occur such as high blood sugar and blood pressure, sleep disorder, vertigo, headaches, nausea (Schmiedel, 2011). The emotional symptoms of long time stress can be increased forgetfulness, difficulty making decisions, a loss of a sense of humour, increase irritability, aggression or muddiness, negative thinking, poorer concentration and being constantly worried (StressLess Living, 2014).

The body is functioning on much higher lever, burning too much fuel than it should, and the person is feeling tired all the time and cannot relax. All this shows that this person is slowly becoming exhausted. If nothing is being done to prevent or stop the second phase the third phase soon follows.

2.1.2.2.3 Exhaustion phase

In this phase the body is so worn out that it just shuts down. All the fuel is burnt out and the body cannot function normally anymore. Schmiedel (2011) writes about the level of hormones being low, the immune system is weak and the body is more susceptible to infection, there can be indigestion, problems with heart can occur, a person is depressed and is having suicidal thoughts. Inštitut človeških virov (as cited in Žveglič, 2012) states the following emotional symptoms, which are typical for the third phase: anxiety, fear, disappointment, rage, shame, acute depression, numbness, resistance, lack of emotion, resignation. Pšeničny (as cited in Žveglič, 2012) determines that if the person is burnt-out it can take 2 to 4 years to remedy his body and mind.
2.1.3 Methods of coping with stress and burnout

We can cope with stress on an individual level and on organizational level. Maslach and Leiter (2002) state that an individual approach begins with the individual and soon becomes a group project in the organization. On the other hand, the organizational approach begins with management and becomes an organizational project where all employees participate. The result of both approaches is an effect on discrepancies in the organization.

2.1.3.1 Individual approach

There is a lot written on how to avoid stress and burnout. Almost all authors concluded that a person should use and combine the approaches of coping with stress, which best suits him/her. Such approaches will be effective and will therefore meet seven requirements according to Caplan (as cited in Caputo, 1991). First requirement is that coping technique should allow an active exploration of the reality of the situation. Second, you cannot cope with feelings unless you recognize them first and acknowledge that they are present, thirdly there is an effective effort to engage the help of others and fourthly, problems must be broken down into manageable parts in order to be worked through one at a time. Fifth requirement is that there should be an awareness of the symptoms and their effect on the person, sixth is to recognize what one can control and what is beyond one’s control. And the last requirement is that the individual has a self-trust and the trust of others.

There are quite a lot of approaches we can use in order to be and stay mentally and physically fit. Schmiedel (2011) summarizes the following approaches:

- use of natural medicine such as homeopathic medicine, herbs or aromatherapy,
- changing eating habits such as start to eat more fruits, vegetables, whole-wheat bread, stop drinking alcohol and coffee, quit smoking,
- sport activity,
- relaxation and regeneration (yoga, meditation, tai chi, etc.),
- psychotherapy.

He gave emphasis to physical approaches. The bottom line is we can see that to avoid stress and burnout a person must take care of himself in the first place. DelGuidice (2011) and Caputo (1991) state that there are a few things we must learn and do to successfully cope with stress:

- learn to say no (when your working schedule gets too crowded, you must skip certain assignments because you cannot be in two places at the same time),
- learn to leave work (if you are sick, you must be on sick leave and not at work),
- learn to ask for help when you need it,
- reach out to a colleague if you are feeling too stressed,
- learn to avoid an occupational hazard (maintain physical and mental health),
- attend conferences and workshops, read professional literature to stay current,
- manage time carefully,
- set goals,
- confront others (if the source of work stress are people),
- take direct action when a stressor occurs,
- think and live positive,
- learn relaxation techniques,
- break away (time out, making appointment with yourself…),
- build a support system,
- improve your work environment,
- take good emotional care of yourself (take things less personally for example),
- take good physical care of yourself,
- check yourself for signs of burnout every now and then,
- expand and grow (do some things differently, do new things...).
And if this all is not enough to reduce stress there is always one last thing we can do, we can always find a new job.

The individual approaches cannot bring success unless changes are made at the organizational level as well.

2.1.3.2 Organizational approach

Stress and burnout can bring high costs for the organization. Loss of motivation, many sick leaves, increased staff turnover, poor delivery of services, all this contributes to higher operating costs. One of the organization’s goals must therefore be to make work environment less stressful. Ferjan (as cited in Žveglič, 2012) claims that organizations should take care of their employees with:

- proper payment for their work
- suitable and manageable work load
- rewards for a job well done
- right values and equity
- clearly defined work tasks
- good working relations
- work-life balance.

Caputo’s (1991) classification of what an organization should do against stress and burnout is less ‘financial’. She finds the psychological and physical aspect of work more important than the financial aspect. Therefore, the organization’s task in fighting the stress is:

- set realistic job expectation
- set clear lines of authority and responsibility (such as defining the hierarchical reporting structure clearly)
- job modification and rotation
- opportunities for autonomy (some employees have maybe better ways of dealing with a problem and to some extent they should have autonomy for doing that)
• positive feedback (incentive programs such as employee of the month, appreciation programs such as for example technical services appreciation week)
• win-win atmosphere (participation of the employees in the decision making, opportunities to grow with learning new things, advocacy, staff meetings, daily management of work, change of physical environment)
• employee health programs (fitness programs)
• support and mentoring (supervisory support, peer support, mentoring for professional growth)

All members of an organization, employees and managers, should be educated in the symptoms, causes and consequences of stress and burnout and know the techniques of preventing. It is crucial that an organization takes active steps in order to lessen the stress and prevent burnout.

2.2 REFERENCE SERVICE

2.2.1 Definition and history of reference work

Reference work can be seen as librarians helping the users to meet their information needs. Reference and User Services Association or RUSA (2016) defines reference work as set of reference transactions and other activities that involve the creation, management, and assessment of information or research resources, tools, and services.

Reference librarianship has its roots in the second half of the nineteenth century with the rise of the education institutions. People that were then in the education process needed information, which could be found only in the libraries. However, a problem occurred because they did not know how to search for information in the library. Therefore librarians soon became the link (so called intermediaries) between the users and library collection (Bunge and Bopp, 2001).
Green wrote in 1876 (as cited in Bunge and Bopp, 2001) that librarians are those who give the users information, guidance and instruction. Reference librarians were the ones who knew everything. There was no information explosion, they could remember everything and locate everything by heart. They were the ‘kings’ in their library. Back then reference librarians had personal contact with the users, the users usually assumed that they know the answers to all the questions asked and can find all the books or articles they want to read.

The twentieth century was the time of big changes for the reference librarians. Reference service started to use the telephone to answer reference questions; they started to receive mailed or referred questions. The reference work became more effective and efficient with specialization of librarians just for the reference service. The invention of computers and internet shifted the work of reference librarians to the higher ground.

### 2.2.2 Knowledge and skills of a reference librarian today

Being a reference librarian in today’s world is very hard and demanding. Increasing amount of information, new technologies, fast changing user needs etc. - all this represents a big challenge for the reference librarian. The role of the reference librarian has changed through the time and is still changing rapidly. Now everything has transferred to the virtual world.

Reference librarians nowadays have to be familiar with social networks such as Facebook or Twitter or in which database they can find certain information. They have to be aware of the fact that the number of e-reference sources is increasing.

When patrons come to the library to get the information they need, reference librarian is the first person they turn to. Reference librarians give the patrons the needed information, guide them through the information process and instruct them how to use databases, other information resources or how to find the wanted book in the library. Therefore, the reference librarian must possess a lot of knowledge and has to have many skills. He must know how to:
• search in different sources of information and where to search for which information (online databases, encyclopaedias, catalogues, dictionaries, almanacs, handbooks etc.)

• use different web services that are on the website of his library

• use different software programs that the library has

• find the wanted book in the library (in which order the books are sorted – usually they are sorted in accordance with the UDC and within the UDC group alphabetically)

• lead the reference interview to get the right picture of what the user really wants (presuming that the user usually does not ask about the thing he wants at first)

• communicate with the user in the right way

• search more advanced (Boolean searching, search in more databases at the same time)

• give assistance according to various groups of library users (children, young adults, users with disabilities etc.)

As in the past, people still presume that reference librarian has an answer to every question they might have when they come to the library. Bell (2009) found out that reference librarians now need new skills (like e-book skills or skills about how to find wanted information in databases in the internet). He realized that when half of the library’s reference collection in his library went away and everything that was left was e-books. He found an A-Z e-book list from Serials Solution very useful so he could search faster and more efficient. There is always something new to learn in the library because the technology is changing faster as anyone might think.

On the other hand, Miller (2007) found out that people are not coming to the library to find the information they need because they find everything on the internet. Due to the information explosion there is a lot of information, which is not relevant for the user who looks for the info about the known Slovenian author Ivan Cankar for example. He can hardly break through the mass of information and in the end; he can find only three or four useful links. What the user is not aware is that he can access many valuable databases because of the libraries and similar institutions. There is a little personal contact between the user and the reference
librarian these days. The contact transferred from personal to virtual. In addition, the reference librarians have changed; they adapted their knowledge and skills so that they could serve the users as best as they can.

Even the staffing has changed through time. Banks and Pracht (2008) realize that before only the educated librarians could work behind the reference desk but now due to the internet resources the number of reference questions has decreased and library managers prefer to put paraprofessionals or non-degreed personnel behind the reference desk. This staffing tactic has been used as a cost saving measure. They have experienced such changes in their university library. They have done a survey among the academic librarians in the United States and found out that among surveyed libraries 62 percent use non-degreed personnel at the reference desk because of the decreasing number of reference questions asked.

Morgan (2009) found out that the educated librarians and paraprofessionals must be trained to perform the best level of service to the users. She also wrote a manual for librarians who come in contact with the reference service. Welch (1999) has already realized by the end of the 90’s that the reference librarian has to have core technical competencies like knowledge of content and coverage of different electronic sources, he must be able to recommend the right electronic sources to the users, he must know how to use thesauri and end-user guides, he must know how to search and display the results and finally of course he must know how to analyse and interpret the results.

Few years later Luo (2006) wrote about a bit different list of skills. Librarian has to have basic computer skills, that means that he has to be familiar with computers, he has to effectively use chat software, have good reference interview skills, online communication skills, knowledge of electronic resources and searching skills, must know how to evaluate resources and services to get the best information needed; play an instructional role for the users, can think quick, must know how to work in collaborative environment, must know how to multi-task, must be ethical, has the ability to derive professional satisfaction by doing his job.

Shumaker (2009) realized that nowadays reference librarians do not just work in libraries; they are also getting out of the library. They are going to meetings of research teams and academic departments or they are co-teaching
classes. They are also managing project web sites, editing news feeds for distributed teams, and teaching distance courses. So the new reference librarians must also have some teaching skills.

2.2.3 Characteristics of a good reference librarian

A good reference librarian should also have the right personality for the reference service. Anderson, Sprekle and Zupanič (as cited in Mežan, 2009) say that he should have the following characteristics:

- always be inquisitive
- be empathic
- intuitive
- have the ability to think logically
- be accessible
- be very flexible
- have a good memory
- be punctual and tidy
- must be precise
- communicative
- be patient
- be persistent
- have a sense of humour
- be creative
- be thoughtful
- be innovative etc.

2.3 STRESS AND BURNOUT IN REFERENCE SERVICE

Although the reference work has changed through the years, the core of the reference service remains the same. In the core are the user and the information.
The reference librarian is still the link between them. Only the ways of providing the information and the factors of stress have changed slightly.

2.3.1 Factors of stress in reference work

Modern information society demands that the reference librarian has the knowledge on different information sources, knows how to deal with changing information technology and knows how to fulfil user’s information needs. There are four groups of factors that can contribute to the stress of the reference librarian (Caputo, 1991; Plevel, 2005):

- technology
- users
- work environment and
- reference librarian’s personality

Looking from the point view of the reference librarian, the first three factors are external and the fourth one is internal.

2.3.1.1 Technology

Abram (2009) claims that librarianship is the first global and international information profession. According to Cassel and Hiremath (2009, p. XI) library is a “location where new and emerging information technologies and resources are combined with traditional sources of knowledge in a user-focused, service-rich environment that supports today’s social and educational patterns of learning, teaching and research”.

Information technology was certainly the one thing that contributed to the globalization of the reference librarianship. Reference librarians should therefore be up-to-date with the newest technologies. Making changes with introduction of a new technology (for example introduction of electronic resources and digitized materials) can cause a lot of stress especially if the reference librarian is not so technically skilled. Such stress is known as technostress (Kupersmith, 1992).
The use of computers and internet resulted in switching from personal to digital (or virtual) reference which means that in the process of providing digital reference service librarian receives question either via e-mail, web interface, chat or even through a video-conference, identifies the query and then decides appropriate course of action (Berube, 2003). Result of such communication is the absence of personal contact, which can sometimes also be stressful because when completing such communication, reference librarians can have an unfulfilled sense of accomplishment (Knibbe-Haanstra, 2008).

Reference librarians are also expected to find a new and creative ways of improving the reference service, which includes the construction and maintenance of a library’s website, blogs, wikis and advanced knowledge in online communication, such as chat reference or even virtual worlds (Knibbe-Haanstra, 2008). Due to their workload, they are often forced to learn about new technologies and new resources in a too short period of time, which can also contribute to greater levels of stress.

2.3.1.2 Users

Working with public is always stressful either in virtual or in real world. Although internet brought with it a flood of information and at first there seemed to be no more need for the reference librarian because everything is on the web. However, the case is just the opposite.

The users are finding a large amounts of information and do not know which information can be useful for them. Therefore, they still ‘use’ reference librarians as an intermediator to get the right information. Due to the fast way of life they are becoming more and more demanding, wanted information must be delivered in an instant. Just like they are used to getting information on the internet right away, the same is expected from the reference librarian.

Another cause of user related stress is that reference librarian is obliged to answer questions that are outside of his scope of knowledge (Knibbe-Haanstra, 2008).
2.3.1.3 Work environment

Factors of stress in the work environment are described in the chapter 2.1.1.3. I would like to emphasize two factors of work environment stress, which can be present in the reference work. These are role conflict and change management.

2.3.1.4 Reference librarians personality

Personality plays a great role in determining if the librarian is more prone to experiencing stress and burnout. Caputo (1991) states that high idealism, perfectionism, over commitment and single-mindedness are characteristics of a librarian who is on a good way to be burnt-out.

High idealistic thoughts such as the librarian will be able to help all the patrons that come to the library or that he will be highly appreciated by the patrons are unrealistic. The person is therefore much more disappointed when he sees the real picture.

Perfectionism is another characteristic that a librarian should be aware of. Nobody is perfect. When striving to perfection, it can happen that nothing is ever done well enough to satisfy the librarian.

Over commitment is very much connected to perfectionism. If a person has a hard time to say no to any task and is in addition also a perfectionist has a greater tendency to be highly stressed and eventually burnout. Competition can also lead to over commitment (Caputo, 1991).

A single-minded person considers his work the most important thing in life. If such person is successful at work, he is doing well psychologically. And if he is not successful psychological well-being deteriorates rapidly.
2.3.2 Review of previous research in the world literature

The stress and burnout amongst librarians became the topic of scientific research already in the 1980’s mostly in the USA. Haack, Jones and Roose (1984) studied 92 librarians using the Staff Burnout Scale (hereinafter SBS) for health professionals which is a 30-item inventory developed to measure burnout. The SBS measures attitude, feelings and behaviour of the respondent. They also used projective drawing technique, where the participants of the study were asked to draw how burnt-out they felt at the time. Only 48 participants drew a picture. The drawings were then matched with the SBS questionnaires, which were then analysed.

The researchers found out that most of the librarians who participated in the study were reference librarians. 23% of the respondents were in the very calm stage, 35% were in the middle of the scale, which meant that they would become tense during a heavy project and the tension lasted until the end of the project. This group did not complain about stress. The next 28% of the respondents showed psychological tension which lasted a longer period of time and at the time of the survey they were tense. The last 14% of the participants showed severe and sustained psychological tension.

The researchers concluded that 42% of the participants were near burnout and that librarians are experiencing as much burnout as other occupational groups such as health professionals. They stated that there was no way of knowing how many librarians were really on the verge to be burnt-out, since they were a neglected population in the research literature at that time.

Grosser (1987) criticized the way the research sample in this study was selected because all the participants of the study were in a workshop on reference work.

Smith, Birch and Marchant (1984) conducted a survey amongst the public reference librarians in America’s medium-sized to large public reference areas. They used the Maslach Burnout Inventory (hereinafter MBI) and have found out that many reference librarians experience high levels of burnout, (20-35% of the surveyed population). Librarians were not experiencing positive feelings of personal accomplishment, felt alienated from their patrons, one in five public
reference librarians experienced intense levels of emotional exhaustion. Less prone to burnout were married librarians, being employed part-time also increased immunity against burnout. More educated librarians experienced higher levels of burnout; older librarians were not so prone to burnout, because they usually had more control over their work situation. Reference librarians suffered most from feeling a lack of personal accomplishment because there were no new challenges at work.

The same three authors did a second research in 1986 (as cited in Fimian, Benedict and Johnson, 1989) where they wanted to know how the level of burnout is related to role ambiguity and role conflict. The results showed that when role ambiguity and role conflict were present in the workplace, from 25% to 35% of surveyed librarians experienced high burnout levels.

In 1983 Smith and Nelson (as cited in Grosser, 1987) did a study amongst 380 reference librarians from academic libraries. The Forbes Burnout Survey was used and no librarian received a very high score, which would show high level of burnout, only five librarians received higher scores, which was the indicator that they were suffering from mild burnout. Based on the results, the researchers concluded that academic reference librarians do not seem to be prone to burnout. The results of this study were contradictory to the results of previous studies.

Ollendorff did a study in 1989 about how much the librarians knew about stress management and handled stress. She used a questionnaire, which she had developed for the survey. Her survey population were the librarians of Kent State University Library (18 librarians). The survey has shown that 28% of the librarians surveyed knew little or nothing about stress management. 82% on the other hand thought that it would be beneficial to learn something about stress management. The results also showed that only 11.1% of the chosen population practiced different techniques in order to prevent stress. 60% of the participants did not think that stress management was necessary part of librarianship training and 88.8% felt that it should be part of on the job in-service training.

Burnout and role stress in bibliographic instruction (hereinafter BI) librarians were the topic of Affleck’s (1996) study. She had used MBI and Role questionnaire and her study group were the BI librarians in comprehensive and liberal arts colleges in New England. She predicted that the factors that had contributed to the
role stress were lack of faculty status and lack of educational preparation. First she
did the survey with MBI and in the second step were follow up interviews where
she had chosen six librarians from the first survey group. The results showed that
there is a strong correlation between role stress and burnout and that the factors
of role stress were contributing to the level of burnout. Among the surveyed BI
librarians, 8.5% were showing high level of burnout in all three dimensions of burnout, with experiencing high levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization
and diminished sense of personal accomplishment. 52.8% of BI librarians studied
showed high level of burnout in one dimension and 14.8% in two dimensions. Her
finding was that role conflict contributed to two dimensions of burnout, emotional
exhaustion and depersonalization.

Assessing technostress at the reference desk was the aim of the next
survey. Rose, Stoklosa and Gray (1998) assessed reference librarians in the
academic libraries by using the focus group approach. They assumed that
technology has a big impact on causing anxiety of the reference librarians. The
focus group consisted of 8 librarians. The participants were librarians whose
primary work was not reference work, because they staffed reference desk only
few hours a week. They shared the same institutional mission, similar educational
backgrounds and sense of commitment to the library's service philosophy.

The authors found out that for the participants of the study doing part-time
reference work was a diversion from their primary work. Although they felt a great
deal of frustration with not having enough time to master reference, found it
difficult to remember basic information and felt a bit isolated because of their other
commitments. Interaction with patrons was the next area that caused anxiety.
Although overall librarians were gratified when they helped the users, anxiety
occurred when misunderstandings happened. They said that the most stressful
and intrusive thing in reference was the phone.

The use of technology in the reference work increased user's expectations.
Users were very demanding, had unrealistic expectations of computerized retrieval
systems and were not thinking critically. Furthermore, they did not understand the
content of end-user resources and used only the resource that was most familiar
to them.
Focus group participants felt that the electronic resources were so complex that they needed ongoing training. They wished that they were more technologically knowledgeable, that they could learn about technology spontaneously and had time to practice on the computer systems.

Bottom line is, researchers found out that technology was just one of the four groups of stressors, which have contributed to the reference service stress. The other three were users, environment and staffing.

As previously mentioned the majority of the research about stress and burnout was done in USA in the 80’s and 90’s of the past century. In other parts of the world the first research on stress and burnout was done in the beginning of the 21st century. In Greece for example Togia (2005) measured burnout in Greek academic libraries. The method of collecting data was a questionnaire and the survey participants were 136 librarians in 30 academic libraries. Questionnaire contained slightly changed MBI questions. The results of the study showed that academic librarians in Greece were not so much under stress and therefore were not prone to burnout. Respondents were showing low levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and slightly higher level of personal accomplishment, which was just the opposite of the third dimension of burnout according to Maslach, which is reduced personal accomplishment.

Additional purpose of the study was to examine the influence of characteristics of the librarians on the three dimensions of burnout. The characteristics were age, number of years working as a librarian and participation in decision making which were found to be independent of the level of the burnout.

Powers (2010) searched for librarian’s anxiety in her study among California’s community college reference librarians. Her aim was to determine if there were some affective motifs, which could be linked to the reference service situations where librarians felt anxious. 37 librarians from 14 institutions were studied. The study also looked for pointers of what librarians felt were the important issues, problems and rewards of the reference service in their environment and how they felt about these issues.

Reference librarians declared that their work was primary teaching. They stated that the most challenging aspect of providing reference service was as they called it, frustrated teaching (29%), which meant that there were some patrons
who cannot be satisfied because their problem was more with their understanding or their attitude. They neither listen nor care about the information seeking process; they just want someone to fulfill their information needs.

Working at the reference desk meant for 22% of the participants to always be busy doing all things for all people, 17% stated that most of the work is reference and 13% said that most of their work is directional. Types of questions most asked were 42% reference, 38% of questions were in of a technological nature, 18% directional and only 2% were instruction questions. In providing reference service the reference librarians liked most of all the personal satisfaction when they successfully helped the patron.

When talking about staying in touch with current trends in reference service librarians responded that they learn a lot from meetings (40%), professional literature (36%) and the internet (24%). Around 1/3 of the participants would like to do more training in mastering Web 2.0 tools and apps and would like more technical support to provide better reference service. Librarians were concerned about constrains (such as understaffing or budget cuts) which were beyond their control and therefore they could not provide excellent reference service and could not be in touch with the trends in the librarianship.

2.3.3 Review of previous research in Slovenia

In Slovenia, the stress and burnout in library service became the topic of the research in the beginning of the 21st century. Lemut (2002) studied the stereotype of librarianship being one of non- or less-stressful professions. Participants of her study were 100 librarians who worked in Slovenian public libraries. Questionnaire was used as a method for gathering information.

Most participants of the study were women (91%), 40% of respondents were from 36-45 years old and almost half of all respondents had finished university. It is interesting that 68% of the surveyed librarians are very satisfied with the occupation they have chosen.
Most stressful event for them was working at artificial light, which scored 4.5 out of 7, which meant that that was not so stressful at all. The least stressful thing for the participants was being forced to continue education, which scored 1.7.

Lemut (2002) confirmed her hypothesis that being a librarian is not very stressful occupation. Her findings were quite the opposite to the findings of surveys that were done in America.

Further on she wanted to find out what kinds of action do the librarians undertake when a problem occurs. Her findings were that librarians usually use constructive action and mobilization of inner strength (they solve the problem systematically, gradually and they think positive about solving the problem).

Plelevel (2005), Zabukovec and Plelevel (2006) studied librarians in school libraries and their strategies of dealing with stress. They wanted to find out how stressful work of a school librarian was and which were the factors that contributed to greater levels of stress. Their population consisted of 46 school librarians. Two questionnaires were used, one for the factors of stress and one for the strategies of dealing with stress.

Groups of factors of stress were the activity of the librarian, relationships with co-workers, working conditions and patrons. Patrons were the most stressful factor out of all, although this factor was rated only as moderately stressful (2.03 on a scale from 0-4, with 0 being non-stressful and 4 being extremely stressful). In second place were working conditions, which were also rated as moderately stressful (1.94). Third place went to relationships with co-workers (1.71) and the last was the activity of the librarian (1.57). When summarized, school librarians on average did not have very stressful work.

Lemut (2002), Zabukovec and Plelevel (2006) studied the strategies of dealing with stress. The authors listed six strategies of dealing with stress:

- confidence
- time management
- rational thinking
- creating better interpersonal relationships
- taking care of themselves
- adjustment
The scale here was also from 0-4, 0 meaning never and 4 meaning always. From 0-0.5 it was never used strategies, 0.6-1.5 seldom used strategies, 1.6-2.5 sometimes used strategies, 2.6-3.5 often used strategies and 3.6-4 always used strategies. Confidence was rated 2.12, which meant sometimes-used strategy of dealing with stress. School librarians sometimes asked for help and said no, when they could not cope with their work. Time management scored 2.24 and it was also sometimes used strategy. Rational thinking had 2.67, which meant that it was often used strategy because librarians could find the correlation between being in a bad mood and the event that has caused it. When they got agitated they could parse the causes of their (not) well-being. Creating better interpersonal relationships scored the highest among all (3.03) and it was also often used strategy. Taking care of themselves had 2.41, adjustment 2.19 and were also sometimes used strategies. No strategy was used always or never.

School librarians were also examined by Slivar (2010), who studied stress and job satisfaction among them. Participants were 256 school librarians, who were mostly women (95.3%).

He used three questionnaires (one for the stressors, adapted Maslach questionnaire for burnout and adapted questionnaire Job Satisfaction Survey for work satisfaction).

Five of the most powerful stressors for the school librarians are public criticism and error warning from the management (3.59), psychological pressures and tacit threats from management (3.51), conflicts with co-workers (3.46), constant time pressure (3.44) and management intentionally causing a nuisance (3.43). Author named these five stressors as maltreatment and those stressor areas scored 3.27. The second group were users (3.08), third working conditions (2.99) and fourth relationships with co-workers (2.93).

He found out that 52% of the participants in the study experienced low level of burnout, 47% experienced moderate level of burnout and only 1% high level of burnout. What was worrying were those librarians who were showing moderate level of burnout because this kind of level of burnout has also negative consequences on librarians’ quality of work.

Not being satisfied with the work in the library has a significant impact on the level of stress. Studies have shown that there is a correlation between causes
for work dissatisfaction and stressors. Further topic of the study was which areas of stressors present in the school libraries significantly affect job satisfaction and which areas of stressors have effect on individual dimensions of burnout. The areas of stressors were users, working conditions, relationships with co-workers and maltreatment. The dimensions of burnout were emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal fulfilment and job satisfaction was added as a special dimension.

Results have shown that almost 13% of job dissatisfaction, 22% of emotional exhaustion, 3% of personal fulfilment and 5% on depersonalization is correlated with those four areas of stressors. Slivar (2010) also determined that librarians who were showing a greater level of burnout were on average more dissatisfied with their job than the ones that were not experiencing burnout. We can see that being a school librarian can sometimes be quite a stressful occupation.

Focus of all mentioned studies in Slovenia seemed to be mostly on school librarians. Public librarians were also studied but not as much as school librarians. Academic and special librarians were rarely mentioned although they are probably facing almost the same type of stressors and job dissatisfaction as school librarians do.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

In accordance with the research problem, stating there is stress and burnout in the reference service and in accordance with the purpose of the research (trying to determine the levels of stress reference librarians in public, academic and special libraries are experiencing when performing their work) the appropriate research method was chosen.

When conducting a research one should choose a research method with great care in order to get the right kind of information. A research method of quantitative type will be used in this study. This is the questionnaire, which is the most appropriate and suitable method here. Questionnaire is very economical and effective because great amounts of data can be gathered in a short period of time.
It also does not consume a lot of time for the participants of the study. It allows us to gather data about human behaviour, which is determined by ability, views, thinking, emotions, values etc. (Ambrožič, 2005). It should be clear and understandable and adjusted in such a way that all participants will answer all the questions although they may not understand some of them.

The research was conducted in the following steps:

- preparing for the research and compiling the questionnaire
- sending the questionnaire to the participants of the study which was done with the help of web tool www.1ka.si
- collecting the data
- processing the gathered data
- analysis of the results
- presentation of the results in the form of charts
- drawing conclusions on the basis of the findings.

3.1 POPULATION

A research population is usually a large group of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a scientific research. All individuals or objects within a certain population have a common, binding characteristic or quality (Explorable Psychology Experiments, 2016).

The population consisted of the reference librarians in special, public and academic libraries. According to CeZaR in 2013 there were 58 public libraries, 84 academic libraries and 112 special libraries in Slovenia. The questionnaire was sent to the general email addresses of the libraries. A list of emails of libraries in the COBISS system was compiled and emails from libraries not in the COBISS system were also added. This was the first part of the study.

I also wanted to figure out how the managers of the libraries see the work of the reference librarians; therefore, there was also the second part of the study. A second questionnaire was sent to the managers of all the libraries already included in the first part of the study.
3.2 QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire is one of the most used quantitative methods in research. Both questionnaires were written and compiled with the help of the web tool www.1ka.si. They were sent to all academic, public and special libraries in Slovenia.

The biggest weakness of this method is that the response will not be 100%. Other weaknesses of this method are also that details are often left out; the questionnaire does not give enough data and cannot be well understood, we cannot monitor the conditions, when the questions are answered; the questions have different impact on people, they understand them differently, they have different habits. Therefore I compiled my questionnaire in that way that I got the right answers.

3.2.1 Types of the questions

Different types of questions were used in the questionnaire. There were so-called open, closed and combined (a combination of open and closed) questions. With open questions, there is just a question and the person who is filling out the questionnaire can write the answer in his/her own words. Usually this type of questions is used for opinions. There can be only few such questions in a questionnaire because people do not like to answer them. In their opinion such questions take too much time to answer, so people usually avoid them.

Other questions are closed questions. With such question, there are two or more possible answers and people just choose the ‘right’ answer. In the questionnaire there are usually more closed than open questions.

There is also the third kind of questions, which is the combination of previous two types. With such questions there are a few given answers (like yes or no for example) and there is also option other. And if the person has some other opinion he/she can write the answer. The questions in questionnaire should be clear and easy, so anyone can understand and answer them. On the other hand,
the questions should not be too universal, non-personal and should not have too many answers.

Written questionnaire was suitable because I wanted to gather a large amount of data to compare, was anonymous and not as disruptive, I could question many people for which I could not find the time and place in other circumstances.

3.2.2 Online survey

The survey was done with the help of a web tool www.1ka.si. With the help of this technology, I gathered and compiled a lot of information in a very short time. Online survey has many advantages such as (Gingery, 2011):

- low costs,
- automation (answers of respondents are stored automatically),
- real-time access (the survey is available all the time),
- less time,
- convenience of the respondents (respondents answer the questions when they have time, in their own pace, even stop during the process and continue later),
- design flexibility,
- there is no interviewer (anonymity, the interviewer cannot have influence on the respondents answers).

Gingery also (2011) writes that the disadvantages of online survey are:

- limited sampling and respondent availability (some respondents that are included in the survey, may not have internet access or e-mail),
- possible cooperation problems (nowadays we receive a lot of mail that we do not want and there is a big probability that such mail will be deleted),
- no interviewer (as there is an advantage of not having an interviewer, there is a disadvantage that there is no one who could give the respondents a further explanation of the questions in the questionnaire).
3.2.3 Description of the questionnaires

3.2.3.1 Questionnaire for the reference librarians

The first questionnaire consisted of 19 questions, where most of the questions were closed (13), 5 questions were combination of open and closed questions and 1 question was open type.

The questionnaire for reference librarians was divided into four parts. The first part consisted of demographic questions, such as age, gender, education, the second part consisted of questions about the stress and burnout in conjunction to reference librarianship, the third part included questions about attitude towards work, influence of reference work on physical and psychological well-being and if the respondents were satisfied with their life. The last part included questions about how they avoid stress and burnout.

The questionnaire for reference librarians is to be found in the Appendix 1.

3.2.3.2 Questionnaire for the library managers

The second questionnaire was designed for library managers and it contained similar questions as the questionnaire for the reference librarians, although it was much shorter. There were 14 questions, 10 questions were closed and only 4 were a combination of open and closed. There were no open type questions. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. First part contained demographic questions and questions about respondents, such as gender, age, type of the library, number of librarians in the library, the second part contained questions about stress and burnout in the reference work and the third part contained questions about how managers help to prevent reference librarians not to get burnt-out. The questionnaire for library managers is to be found in the Appendix 2.
4 RESULTS

4.1 SURVEY OF REFERENCE LIBRARIANS

Questionnaire was emailed to the general e-mail addresses of 58 public libraries, 84 academic libraries and 112 special libraries in Slovenia. 382 reference librarians responded. Out of those 382 responses were 74 where the questionnaire was not completed. When processing the data only questionnaires, which were fully completed, were used (308). Due to the high rate of the return, I can only presume that the topic is of great interest to Slovenian reference librarians.

4.1.1 Demographic information about the respondents

4.1.1.1 Age of the respondents

As already mentioned, 308 reference librarians were included in the study. Age structure of the reference librarians is presented in Figure 4. Out of 308 reference librarians that responded, 106 (34.4%) librarians were between 36 and 45 years old, 90 (29.2%) librarians were between 46 and 55 years old, 78 (25.3%) librarians were between 26 and 35 years old. More than 56 years old were only 30 (9.8%) librarians. 4 (1.3%) were those who were younger than 25 years.

Please indicate your age group. (n=308)

Figure 4. Age of respondents – librarians
4.1.1.2 Gender of the respondents

Librarianship is predominantly a female occupation, which was also shown in this study. As seen in Figure 5, 263 (85.4%) of the respondents were female and only 45 (14.6%) were male.

![Gender of respondents - librarians](image)

Figure 5. Gender of respondents - librarians

4.1.1.3 Education of the respondents

As seen in Figure 6, 217 (70.5%) reference librarians have obtained the so-called 7th level of education (they had either completed the old university program or had studied in the new Bologna programs), 34 (11%) have completed the 6th level of education and 31 (10.1%) have completed secondary school. Only 20 (6.5%) have a scientific master's degree and 6 (1.9%) have a Ph.D.

![Highest degree of education completed](image)

Figure 6. Education of respondents - librarians
4.1.2 Type of the library

The next question was the type of the library where the respondents were employed. As Figure 7 shows, 155 (50.3%) respondents work in public libraries, 110 (35.7%) are employed in academic libraries and only 43 (14%) in special libraries.

What type of library do you work at? (n=308)

![Bar chart showing the distribution of respondents by type of library](image)

Figure 7. Type of the library - librarians

4.1.3 Reference work and other assignments

Results showed that 290 (94.2%) reference librarians did not do just reference work but they also had other assignments such as acquisition, cataloguing, loan etc. Only 18 (5.8%) reference librarians were 100% reference librarians (Figure 8).
Do you only do reference work or do you also have other responsibilities (e.g. acquisition, cataloguing, loan, etc.)? (n=308)

![Reference work and other assignments chart]

Figure 8. Reference work and other assignments

4.1.4 Level of satisfaction in performing reference work

As Figure 9 shows, 189 (61.4%) reference librarians were very satisfied with their work, 108 (35.1%) were satisfied and 11 (3.5%) were dissatisfied.

![Level of satisfaction chart]

Figure 9. Level of satisfaction in performing reference work

4.1.5 Experiencing stress at work

Results in Figure 10 show that 113 (36.7%) librarians experience stress at work often and 124 (40.3%) experience stress sometimes. 54 (17.5%) librarians are stressed very often and 10 (3.2%) reference librarians are always stressed. There are also 7 (2.3%) librarians who never experience stress at work.
4.1.6 Factors that contribute to reference stress

Figure 11 shows that working with users is the most stressful part of reference for 144 (46.8%) librarians. The second factor that contributes to the stress is the relationship with co-workers, as stated by 75 (24.3%) librarians. 36 (11.7%) librarians chose work environment as the cause of the most stress.

34 (11%) participants indicated Other and wrote the following comments (this is a summary of all the commentaries):

- time management,
- fast changing environment,
- work overload,
• understaffing,
• paper work, administration,
• relations with superiors, funders, managers
• (dis)organization of work in the library,
• organization of events,
• performing tasks not related to librarianship.

Only 19 (6.2%) reference librarians indicated that technology is the most stressful part of reference work.

4.1.7 Estimated level of stress when performing reference work

In the next survey question, respondents estimated how stressful the reference work in their opinion is. The ranking was from 1 – 5, with 1 meaning being very stressful and 5 completely non-stressful. Figure 12 shows that 146 (47.4%) respondents decided for reference work being moderate stressful and had chosen the score of 3. 56 (18.2%) had chosen score of 2, which meant that the work is stressful in their opinion. 56 (18.2%) respondents had chosen the score of 4 (not so stressful). 25 (8.1%) reference librarians thought that reference work is indeed very stressful and had chosen the score of 1. 25 (8.1%) respondents had chosen the score of 5. In their opinion reference work is completely non-stressful.

![Evaluate how stressful reference work is for you. (n=308)](image)

Figure 12. Estimated level of stress - librarians

4.1.8 Less stressful professions

The questionnaire also contained the question about professions, which are less stressful than a reference librarian. This question was a multiple choice
question. As seen in Figure 13 the least stressful profession in the eyes of the reference librarians’ was a farmer, which was chosen 183 times. The second place went to clerk (chosen 146 times). In the third place was the option Other (76 times chosen) where respondents had written (this is a summary of all the answers):

- every profession can be stressful,
- archivist,
- curator,
- politician,
- musician,
- salesman,
- painter,
- that does not depend on occupation but on the person performing the work,
- professions where there is no contact (dealing) with clients, users,
- working in an office,
- forester,
- on the basis of personal experience I can assure you that being a reference librarian is not stressful,
- working in security,
- professions such as cook, mechanic, varnisher, cosmetician,
- florist.

Then there was a dentist in the fourth place (chosen 64 times), miner in the fifth (63 times) and lawyer in the sixth place (28 times). Manager, teacher, doctor and nurse were in the bottom of the scale, which means that they are considered a more stressful profession than the reference librarian.
In your opinion, which professions are less stressful than being a reference librarian? (Multiple choice question, n=308)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 13. Less stressful professions - librarians*

### 4.1.9 More stressful professions

As Figure 14 shows, teacher tends to be the most stressful profession of all mentioned in the question and it was chosen 202 times, in the second place was doctor (198 times) and 189 times was chosen nurse, which came in the third place. Lawyer was chosen 115 times in the fourth place and miner 86 times in the fifth. Surprisingly the dentist was in the sixth place with 79 points, farmer (51 times) and clerk (42 times), were at the bottom of the scale and were considered non-stressful.
In your opinion, which professions are more stressful than being a reference librarian?
(Multiple choice question, n=308)

Option Other was filled in 38 times and there were answers such as (this is a summary of all the answers):

- every other profession than mentioned above,
- every profession is stressful,
- firefighter,
- police officer,
- head of the state, politician
- salesman,
- everybody has their own responsibilities and duties, therefore they are difficult to compare,
- everybody who works with clients (users) and has to offer excellent information,
- all above mentioned professions except the farmer.

Figure 14. More stressful professions - librarians
4.1.10 Relation between stress and burnout

221 (71.8%) respondents thought that too much stress at a workplace can cause burnout and the opinion of 87 (28.2%) was that burnout cannot occur from work related stress (Figure 15).

![Figure 15. Relation between stress and burnout - librarians](image)

Do you think that stress at your workplace could lead to burnout? (n=308)

4.1.11 Causes of work related burnout

Multiple choice question about work related burnout explored which areas of reference work were the biggest triggers of burnout. Poor work organization was the biggest cause, it was chosen 198 times, then there were three other causes close together, work overload with 148, difficult users with 141 and management with 138 points (Figure 16).

![Figure 16. Causes of work related burnout](image)

In your opinion, what causes burnout at your workplace? (Multiple choice question, n=308)

The option Other was the in the last place, it was filled in 31 times. The
respondents had written commentaries such as (this is a summary of all the commentaries):

- poor relations with co-workers,
- too many visitors, problematic users, noise, phones,
- complicated procedures, work on projects, solving complicated work problems, illness, insufficient lighting, parking, relocation of workers etc.,
- work attitude,
- constant innovations (novelties),
- inability to distance myself from my work,
- old technology,
- working in shifts,
- combination of all mentioned causes and personal characteristics of the librarian,
- lack of staff,
- personal well-being and lack of energy
- stress itself,
- unbalanced diet.

4.1.12 Attitude towards work

Reference librarians’ attitude towards work is shown in the Figure 17. The scale was from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning never, 2 - sometimes, 3 – frequently, 4 - very frequently and 5 - always. The figure projects the average of all answers within single statements.

The reference librarians were very often or always polite and compliant when it came to users (4.5). They very often wanted to improve their working environment (4), were/are optimistic people and live by this principle (4). Often or very often they set the right goals (3.6) and carefully manage their schedule (3.5). The routine tasks were often solved in different ways (3) and they often took difficult users to their heart (2.8). Reference librarians knew what the trends in librarianship are (2.7). What is interesting they often went to work although they were sick (2.7). They sometimes asked for help (2.5) and when they were
stressed, they sometimes complained to the colleagues (2.2). They have still to learn how to say no, because they did it only sometimes (2.2). Only sometimes they let the stressful situation take over (2.1).

With regards to your work situation, please evaluate the following statements (n=308):

![Figure 17. Attitude towards work](image)

4.1.13 Impact of work on physical and emotional well-being of reference librarians

The scale for this set of statements was the same as in the previous question (1 - never, 2 - sometimes, 3 – frequently, 4 - very frequently and 5 – always).

As seen in Figure 18, work on average does not affect reference librarians’ well-being as much as predicted. However, they did frequently think about the problems that occurred at work when they were at home (2.6). The politics of the organization, bureaucracy were often frustrating (2.5) and they frequently felt very exhausted (2.5).

Sometimes they did not have enough time to plan their work (2.3), which goes also for always being under pressure to prove themselves (2.2) and doing a lot more work than they were able to (2.1). Because they sometimes found tasks
frustrating (2.1) and small problems easily upset them (2.1), were therefore also less productive than they should be (2.1). In the same category sometimes falls also the statement that the reference librarians had a feeling that their colleagues do not understand or respect them (2) and developed negative thoughts regarding their job (2). They were sometimes impatient when dealing with other people (1.9) and felt like they do not have anybody to talk to about their problems (1.8). The feeling of working in the wrong organization or doing the wrong job was sometimes present (1.6), because it happened that the work sometimes became a burden to them (1.6).

**Impact of work on your physical and emotional well-being (n=308):**

![Graph showing impact of work on physical and emotional well-being](image)

**Figure 18. Impact of work on physical and emotional well-being**

### 4.1.14 Impact of work on life and level of satisfaction in general

With the next set of statements, the author wanted to find out what kind of impact the work has on life and satisfaction in life in general. The scale was the same like in previous sets of questions (1 - never, 2 - sometimes, 3 – frequently, 4
- very frequently and 5 – always).

Figure 19 shows that out of 308 reference librarians that responded, majority of them were on average very often satisfied with their life (3.8) and with their work (3.7). They also had supporting partners (3.7) and had eaten healthily (3.5). They often took time for themselves, knew how to remove themselves from stress (3.2) and exercised regularly (3.1).

A few of them sometimes felt tired and unmotivated (3.2), if they had problems they could not sleep (2.3). Reference librarians sometimes used relaxation methods to reduce stress (2.1) and sometimes found it hard to coordinate work and family (1.9). It happened on occasion that they missed work due to illness (1.6).

**Impact of work on life and your level of satisfaction in general (n=308):**

![Figure 19](image.png)

Figure 19. Impact of work on life and level of satisfaction

### 4.1.15 Library's management contribution towards reducing stress of reference librarians

With this set of statements the author wanted to show if and how the managers of the libraries contribute to stress reduction of their reference librarians. The scale was as alike to scales in the previous sets of questions (1 - never, 2 - sometimes, 3 – frequently, 4 - very frequently and 5 – always).

As seen in Figure 20, on average library’s managers did often leave certain
choices up to the reference librarian (3.1) and set realistic goals so that they could achieve them (2.8). The next thing that they often did is create a positive work atmosphere (2.7). If an employee did a poor job he/she would certainly often receive negative feedback and criticism (2.7).

Managers often encouraged positive work relations (2.6), supported employee equality (2.6), clearly defined the boundaries of authority and responsibility (2.6) and gave positive feedback and praise to their employees (2.6). Librarians often (2.5) received support, mentorship and manageable workload. Only in a few examples did managers enable employees to ‘circulate’ (2.3) and to participate in sports activities (1.9).

**How does your library’s management contribute towards reducing the stress level of your work? (n=308)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How does your library’s management contribute towards reducing the stress level of your work?</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaves a certain level of independence to the employee</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sets realistic goals that employees can achieve</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates a work atmosphere that both employees and management benefit from</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees receive negative feedback and criticism for a poorly executed job</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages positive work relations</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearly defines the boundaries of authority and responsibility</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports and ensures employee equality</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees receive positive feedback and praise for a job well done</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages support and mentorship among employees</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives everyone as much work as they can manage</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enables employees to ‘circulate’ so that they are not at the same work position all the time</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enables employees to participate in various sports activities</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 20. Library’s management contribution towards reducing stress*

### 4.1.16 Stress reduction

Answers to the only open question in the questionnaire for reference librarians were very diverse. The question was how would you reduce stress in your work situation? 197 reference librarians had written an answer to this question. The most common answers were (this is a summary of all the answers):

- better work organization,
• employees should get oral praises or symbolic prizes for a job well-done,
• an equal treatment of all employees,
• better relations with management,
• better relationships between co-workers,
• greater confidence in the professional judgment of the individual and in his responsibility,
• with new employments,
• with meditation and exercise,
• less bureaucracy,
• with team work,
• reference librarian’s work is not stressful.

4.1.17 Methods for stress reduction/elimination

The last question in the questionnaire was if the librarians use some methods in order to reduce or eliminate work stress. Figure 21 shows that the most used method for stress reduction was recreation (chosen 201 times). The second method were relaxation techniques (chosen 92 times), the third change of diet (82 times) and fourth was the option under Other which was filled in 78 times.

*Do you use any methods to reduce/eliminate stress?* (Multiple choice question, n=308)

![Figure 21. Methods for stress reduction/elimination](image)
Under *Other* there could be found answers such as (this is a summary of all the answers):

- mountaineering,
- going for a walk,
- listening to music,
- reading,
- watching movies,
- hanging out with friends,
- doing crossword puzzles,
- praying,
- hobbies (such as gardening, painting etc.),
- sleeping,
- having a massage,
- play with children,
- bioenergetic therapies, Tibetan exercises, reflex therapy,
- drinking more alcohol,
- smoking more,
- positive thinking,
- playing with domestic animals,
- say no when the boss wants him/her to take on additional work,
- I do not use any methods.

The fifth method was use of natural herbs or homeopathy (chosen 56 times), sixth was aromatherapy (25 times). Reducing coffee or alcohol consumption was in the seventh place (21 times) and what is interesting the use of psychotherapy as a method to reduce stress was chosen 20 times. The last place went to reduction of smoking (16 times).

## 4.2 SURVEY OF LIBRARY MANAGERS

The second part of the study was the survey among the library managers. Questionnaire was emailed to the e-mail addresses of library managers of 58 public libraries, 84 academic libraries and 112 special libraries in Slovenia.
managers responded. Out of those 84 responses were 77 where the questionnaire was completed and only 7 responses where it was not completed entirely. When processing the data only completed questionnaires were used.

4.2.1 Demographic information about the respondents

4.2.1.1 Age of the respondents

Figure 22 shows the age of library managers. None of them were 25 years or under, only 2 (2.6%) were from 26 to 35 years old. 34 (44.1%) were from 36 to 45 years old, 22 (28.6%) managers were from 46 to 55 and 19 (24.7%) over 56 years old.

![Please indicate your age group (n=77)](image)

Figure 22. Age of respondents – library managers

4.2.1.2 Gender of the respondents

Figure 23 shows that 62 (80.5%) respondents are female and 15 (19.5%) male. It is interesting that although the librarianship is predominantly female profession, 1/5 of all the managers are male (according to the sample of the respondents in the survey).
4.2.1.3 Education of the respondents

Results are presented in Figure 24: 77 managers answered the question about completed education. 56 (72.7%) have a university degree, 11 (14.3%) managers have a master’s degree and 6 (7.8%) a doctorate. Only 1 (1.3%) has completed secondary school and 3 (3.9%) have completed higher vocational education.

4.2.2 Type of the library

Figure 25 shows that 28 (36.4%) managers that participated in the survey were from public libraries and 28 (36.4%) were from higher education or university libraries. Only 21 (27.2%) managers were from special libraries.
I can only guess why there was such a low response rate in this survey for managers. Either participating in a survey is a waste of time for them because they have no time to spare or the topic was not interesting enough.

4.2.3 Number of librarians in the library

This question was added to the questionnaire because there are many libraries with only one librarian, especially in special libraries. Those managers, who had chosen the possibility one librarian, did have three questions less to answer than the library managers with more employed librarians.

As shown in Figure 26, 21 (27.3%) library managers answered that they are the manager and a reference librarian in one person. It can be assumed that those were the librarians in the special libraries (see previous chapter). The other 56 (72.7%) managers were from libraries with more librarians employed.
4.2.4 Is work of reference librarians stressful?

As shown in Figure 27, 26 (33.8%) managers responded that the work of a reference librarian is not stressful and 51 (66.2%) said that it is stressful in their opinion.

Figure 27. Work of reference librarians and stress

4.2.5 Level of stress when conducting reference work

Library managers should also estimate how stressful the reference work in their opinion is. The scale was from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning very stressful and 5 not stressful at all.
Figure 28 shows that 30 (39%) managers decided to give the score of 3, which meant that reference work is moderately stressful. And a score of 3 is also the average of all answers. The score of 2 (stressful) gave 16 (20.8%) managers and 7 (9.1%) managers thought that reference work is very stressful and therefore gave a score of 1. On the other side of the scale the score of 4 was chosen by 21 (27.2%) managers and score of 5 which meant not stressful at all was given by 3 (3.9%) managers.

![Figure 28. Estimated level of stress – library managers](image)

### 4.2.6 Less stressful professions

As shown in Figure 29, in the case of less stressful professions than reference librarian, managers answered that the first two were farmer (49) and clerk (48).

In the third place was the option *Other*. Under this option 22 managers wrote answers as (this is a summary of all the answers):

- library manager,
- none of the above,
- all of the above,
- every occupation is stressful,
- the work of reference librarian is by its self not stressful, stressful is the way how users communicate with librarians,
- working in administration,
- cook,
● production worker,

● it is impossible to evaluate how stressful the professions are, since the work within the same profession is differently stressful,

● salesman,

● a profession where there is no working with users.

The profession of dentist was chosen 18 times and lawyer 15 times. In the sixth place was miner with 13 points, teacher got the seventh place with 9 points and manager got eight place with 5 points. Nurse was chosen 5 times and in the last place was doctor which was chosen 3 times.

**In your opinion, which professions are less stressful than being a reference librarian?**

(Multiple choice question, n=77)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 29. Less stressful professions – library managers

### 4.2.7 More stressful professions

As shown in Figure 30 managers decided that doctor is the most stressful profession (chosen 61 times). In the second and third place were teacher (51 times) and manager with 50 points, nurse got 46 points in the fourth place, dentist 30 in the fifth. Lawyer got 29 points and miner 28. Clerk and farmer were in the bottom of the scale with 10 and 9 points.

In the last place was the option under Other where 5 managers wrote:

● every profession can be stressful if there is no joy in performing the work,
In your opinion, which professions are more stressful than being a reference librarian?

(Multiple choice question, n = 77)

### Figure 30. More stressful professions – library managers

#### 4.2.8 Most stressful areas of reference work

As shown in Figure 31, 42 (54.5%) respondents thought that working with users is the most stressful part of reference work. In the second place was relationship with co-workers chosen by 16 (20.8%) respondents. Work environment was in the third place with 9 (11.7%) points and technology got 7 (9.1%) points. Under the option Other in the last place 3 (3.9%) managers wrote that the financing, responsibility of the managers and working in the research field were the most stressful areas for them.
In your opinion, which area of reference work causes the most stress? \( (n = 77) \)

![Figure 31. Most stressful areas of reference work](image)

### 4.2.9 Managers contribution towards reduction of the stress level of reference librarian’s work

This question was the first of three additional questions for libraries with more than one librarian. Answers on this set of statements reflect the manager’s contribution towards reduction of the stress level of reference librarian’s work. The scale was 1 – 5, meaning 1 – never, 2 – sometimes, 3 – frequently 4 – very frequently and 5 – always. The figure projects the average of all answers within single statements.

As seen in Figure 32, managers said that they very frequently support and ensure employee equality (4.3), encourage positive work relations (4.2), set realistic goals (4.1), praise and give positive feedback for a job well done (4) and create good work atmosphere (4).

The score under 4 got independence of the employee (3.9), which still means very frequently. The same goes for giving the employee as much work as he/she can manage (3.8), encouragement of support and mentorship (3.7) and clearly defining the boundaries of authority and responsibility (3.6).

Frequently the managers enabled employees to ‘circulate’ (3.3), gave negative feedback and criticism (3.2) and enabled employees to participate in sport activities (3).
How do you as a library's manager contribute towards reducing the stress level of the reference librarian's work?

| Support and ensure employee equality | 4.3 |
| Encourage positive work relations | 4.2 |
| Set realistic goals that employees can achieve | 4.1 |
| Employees receive positive feedback and praise for a job well done | 4 |
| Create a work atmosphere that employees and management benefit from | 4 |
| Leave a certain level of independence to the employees | 3.9 |
| Give everyone as much work as they can manage | 3.8 |
| Encourage support and mentor-ship among employees | 3.7 |
| Clearly define the boundaries of authority and responsibility | 3.6 |
| Enable employees to circulate so that they are not in the same position all the time | 3.3 |
| Employees receive negative feedback and criticism for a poorly executed job | 3.2 |
| Enable employees to participate in various sports activities | 3 |

Figure 32. Manager's contribution towards reduction of stress level

4.2.10 Relation between stress and burnout

44 (57.1%) managers answered yes to this question, which means that their opinion is that too much work related stress can lead to burnout. 33 (42.9%) managers gave a negative answer; in their eyes stress is not responsible for burnout (Figure 33).

Do you think that stress at the workplace of the reference librarian could lead to burnout? (n = 77)

Figure 33. Relation between stress and burnout – library managers
4.2.11 How do managers act if there is a burnt-out reference librarian?

As shown in Figure 34, out of 56 managers that responded 30 said that they have not had such situation yet, 13 relieve them of their work load, 10 points got the option redeploy the employee to another working post, 9 managers ‘circulate’ their employees so that they cannot get burnt-out.

![Figure 34. Action in the case of burnt-out reference librarian](image)

The last option was Other where 3 managers wrote:

- the employee goes on a sick leave, I divide his work among others, this leads to dissatisfaction,
- I take on his work,
- the employee takes a sick leave, so he can decide which hair on his head hurts (ironically meant); his work is carried out by co-workers.

4.2.12 Employee education on how to overcome stress

56 library managers answered this question. On the topic of education on how to overcome stress 30 (53.6%) replied that they do educate their employees in the techniques on how to overcome stress and 26 (46.4%) answered that they do not (Figure 35).
Do you educate your employees on the topic of overcoming stress? (n = 56)

Figure 35. Employee education about stress reduction

5 DISCUSSION

Reference librarians and library managers were included in the study in order to determine whether reference work is stressful, what the causes for stress are and how the stress is dealt with. Based on the results of the online survey the following research questions and answers can be discussed:

RQ 1: Do reference librarians work under stress?

Most of the librarians stated that they work under stress. Either it is always (3.2%), very often (17.5%), often (36.7%) or only sometimes (40.3%). Only 2.3% of surveyed librarians said that they never work under stress.

When comparing surveys, reference librarians and library managers believe that reference librarians' work is moderately stressful. Librarians assessed that the level of stress in reference librarian's work is 3 and managers' assessment was the same. 66.2% of the managers that responded think that reference work is stressful. Reasons that contribute to the stress of reference librarians can be difficult users, relations with co-workers, technology, work environment, time management, understaffing, too much administration, poor work organization, management etc. Based on the results we can conclude that the answer to this question is yes, the reference librarians do work under stress.
RQ 2: Are reference librarians, whose primary occupation is not just reference work, more stressed than their colleagues in other libraries who work just in reference service?

Regarding the level of satisfaction, 50% of librarians whose work is just reference are satisfied, 38.9% are very satisfied and 11.1% are dissatisfied with the work that they do. On the other hand, librarians that do not do just reference work, 34% are satisfied, 63% are very satisfied and 3% are dissatisfied with their work.

Regarding how often they encounter stress at work 44.4% of reference librarians said that they are often stressed, the same percentage (44.4%) are sometimes stressed; 5.6% of them are very often stressed and 5.6% are always under stress. Never stressed reference librarians do not exist. Out of the librarians, who have also other assignments, 36% are often, 40% are sometimes, 18% are very often and 3% are always stressed. There are also those who are never stressed (3%).

To the question how stressful is reference librarianship, 39% of reference librarians gave a score of 3 (moderately stressful) and the interesting fact is that nobody gave the score of 5 (completely non-stressful). 28% gave a score of 4 (non-stressful), 22% gave the score of 2 (stressful) and 11% gave the reference work 1 (completely stressful). 47% of reference librarians with other assignments gave the score of 3 and 9% gave the score of 5. 18% gave the score of 4, the same percent (18%) gave the score of 2. 8% of reference librarians with other assignments believed that reference work is completely stressful (score of 1).

Results show that reference librarians whose work is only reference are more stressed than the reference librarians who also have other assignments. Reasons for such results can be in various work assignments where there is no contact with users, which can reduce the level of stress. Such assignments are for example cataloguing or acquisition.

The answer to this research question is that reference librarians who also have other assignments are less stressed than those who work just in reference service.
RQ 3: How do reference librarians cope with stress?

201 librarians use sports to reduce stress, 92 use relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation or tai chi. Other librarians answered that they also read, do gardening, paint or listen to music etc. for relaxation purposes. If the stress cannot be reduced with the techniques mentioned above, then psychotherapy is chosen as the method for reducing stress. Stressful work environment forces librarians to take care of their physical and psychological well-being. Reference librarians had found the method or combination of methods of relaxation that suits them most.

RQ 4: Is working with users the most stressful part of the reference librarian’s work?

144 (46.8%) reference librarians out of 308 stated that working with users is the most stressful part of their job. That is almost half of all surveyed reference librarians. Other 53.2% of librarians divided their answers between relationships with co-workers, work environment, technology and the option “other”.

First reason for such results can be that most reference librarians also have other assignments besides reference work and do not have to work with users all of the time, the other reason can also be reference librarians’ personality. Some librarians thrive when performing reference work, others do not.

In the survey of library managers, 54.5% of respondents thought that working with users is the most stressful part of reference work. It is interesting that higher percentage of library managers than reference librarians think that working with users contributes the most to the stress of reference librarians. It can be presumed that many library managers are aware of reference service being a stressful occupation.

We can conclude that working with users is the most stressful part of reference work.

RQ 5: Are there cases of burnt-out reference librarians?

11 (3.5%) out of 308 reference librarians are dissatisfied with their work and 10 (3.2%) always experience stress at work. When we look at the impact of work on physical and psychological well-being the score of 1.6 (sometimes) was given
to the question “Does your work represent a burden to you?” When assessing the impact of work on life and level of satisfaction the score of 1.6 (sometimes) was given to the statement "I often miss work due to illness" and the psychotherapy was chosen 20 times as a method for stress reduction.

In the survey of library managers results show that there sometimes are burnt-out reference librarians. 13 managers stated that they had to relieve the reference librarian of the workload and 10 had to redeploy the employee to another work post. One manager answered that the librarian goes on a sick leave and his work is carried out by co-workers, which is a cause of additional frustration and stress.

It can be only presumed that based on these answers there are cases of burnt-out reference librarians, but it cannot be confidently asserted that there really are some librarians that are burnt-out.

**RQ 6:** Do the library managers help preventing their reference librarians from being too stressed and burnt-out?

The answer could be found, when looked upon from the reference librarians’ and library managers’ point of view. The comparison between answers on the set of statements about manager’s contribution towards reduction of stress level of the reference work was made and as expected the reference librarians’ score was on average one rank lower than the score of the managers. Highest ranked statement by the librarians was that library manager leaves a certain level of independence to the employee (3.1 – frequently). Managers on the other hand gave a score of 3.9 (very frequently) to this statement. Support and ensure employee equality was highest ranked amongst the managers (4.3 – very frequently), librarians gave it a score of 2.6 (frequently). The managers thought that they very frequently set goals that employees can achieve (4.1), but on the other side, librarians have a feeling that this happens only frequently (2.8). Participation in sports activities was in the last place of both surveys (3 – managers, 1.9 – librarians). The one thing that they evaluated quite similar was negative feedback and criticism. 3.2 (frequently) was the score of managers and 2.7 of the librarians.
Although the reference librarians’ score was on average one rank lower than the score of the managers, most statements were ranked with frequently in the study of reference librarians and very frequently in the study of library managers. The reasons for such results can be in different views on the work of library managers. Managers might think that they are helping the reference librarians to reduce stress, but the librarians have a different opinion. We can conclude that the managers do help in preventing or reducing stress occurring in reference librarian’s work to some extent.

**RQ 7:** Do library managers educate their employees on how to overcome stress?

More than half of library managers (53.6%) that participated in the study stated that they do educate their employees on how to overcome stress. It is of a great concern that 46.4% of library managers do not. The reason can be that they believe the education is not necessary or that reference work is not stressful.

We can conclude that to some extent library managers do educate their employees on how to overcome stress.

**RQ 8:** Are older reference librarians less prone to stress and burnout?

Here we must consider the oldest participants of the study and look at their answers. 30 reference librarians that participated in the study were over 56 years old. Their answers to the next three questions were taken into consideration:

- Level of satisfaction with your position and/or the work you do?
- How often do you encounter stress at your workplace?
- Evaluate how stressful reference work is for you (1 – very stressful to 5 – completely non-stressful)

These three questions should provide us with the information whether age is related to stress level. When considering level of satisfaction, only 3 (10%) older reference librarians out of 30 said that they are dissatisfied with their job. The other 27 (90%) are either satisfied or very satisfied with their job. When it comes to encountering stress at their workplace only 2 (6.7%) out of 30 older librarians always experience stress and 3 (10%) very often. The other 25 (83.3%) librarians do not experience stress as much. When evaluating the stress level of reference work 2 (6.7%) librarians gave a score of 1 which means very stressful and 2
(6.7%) gave a score 2 which means stressful. The other 26 (86.6%) librarians chose lesser levels of stress. Summing up all these results we can see that being older, wiser and having much more experience can lessen the level of stress to some extent. However, this is not always the case.

**RQ 9: Can work related stress lead to burnout?**

Almost all past surveys showed that too much work related stress can lead to burnout. The results show that 57.1% of library managers believe work related stress can lead to burnout and so do 71.8% of the reference librarians that participated in the study. The cause for such results can be that work is not the only stressor in life. There are also other factors that cause stress besides work such as sudden life changes and everyday worries, which can also lead to burnout.

Based on these results (especially the results from the study of reference librarians) the conclusion can be drawn that work related stress can cause burnout.

**RQ 10: Do the greatest differences between reference librarians’ and library managers’ opinion regarding stress occur in public libraries?**

To find the answer to this research question next three questions were taken into consideration. Level of stress of reference work, the most stressful area of reference librarians’ work and if work related stress leads to burnout.

a) Public libraries

When assessing the level of stress of reference service librarians’ average was 3.0, library managers’ average was 2.6. Area of reference librarian’s work, which contributes to stress the most, is working with users, chosen by 57% librarians and 71% library managers. For 25% of librarians and 14% of library managers the most stressful part of reference service is the relationship with co-workers. 76% of librarians and 54% of managers think that stress leads to burnout.

b) Academic libraries

Academic librarians gave an average score of 2.9 to stressfulness of reference librarians work, and 3.0 was the average of managers. Area that contributes to stress the most is working with users. Such was the decision of 50% of the
librarians and 36% of the managers. Relationships with co-workers are in second place with 25% of the librarians and 18% of the managers. 68% of the librarians and 64% of the managers answered yes to the question about stress leading to burnout.

c) Special libraries
The average assessment of stress level of reference service was 3.0 for librarians and 3.3 for managers. Working with users is the most stressful part of reference service for 37% of the librarians and 38% of the managers followed by relationships with co-workers (21% of the librarians and 33% of the managers). 65% of the librarians and 52% of the managers answered yes to the question if stress leads to burnout.

Based on the above stated results the greatest differences between the opinion of reference librarians and library managers really do occur in public libraries.

**RQ 11:** Do reference librarians in public libraries experience the highest level of stress among all reference librarians?

To find the answer to this research question, the average of answers to two questions was taken into consideration. The questions were impact of work on physical and emotional well-being and impact of work on life and level of satisfaction in general. The average of answers in special libraries was 2.03 (often) for the first question and 2.93 (very often) for the second. The average of both was 2.48 (often). The average of answers in public libraries was 2.06 (often) for the first and 2.8 (often to very often) for the second question. The average of both results was 2.43 (often). The average of answers in academic libraries was 2.16 for the first and 2.84 for the second question. And the average of both results was 2.5 (often). Although reference librarians experience similar level of stress, according to the results the highest level of stress is experienced by reference librarians in academic libraries (2.5), second are librarians in special libraries (2.48), and third librarians in public libraries (2.43). The reasons for such results can be that reference librarians in academic libraries also have other assignments besides reference work and cannot fully concentrate just on reference work which can cause greater level of stress. On the other hand, many reference librarians in
public libraries usually perform just reference work. The answer to this research question is that reference librarians in public libraries experience the lowest level of stress among all surveyed reference librarians.

6 CONCLUSION

Reference librarianship is a part of library science where the biggest shifts were made in the last decades (especially technological). Reference librarians must have a lot of knowledge and different skills and must master new technologies to successfully perform their work.

The purpose of the research was to find out whether librarians in public, academic and special libraries encounter stress in reference service and what kind of strategy do they choose to cope with stress and so avoid burnout. In accordance with the purpose of the research, the questionnaire was chosen as the most suitable research method. The survey was done among reference librarians and among library managers.

As expected, the results of the study have shown that reference librarians do find their work stressful and have frequently too little time to successfully solve all the tasks they are supposed to. Working with users is the most stressful part of the reference work and there are two areas of reference work that could lead to burnout: poor work organization and work overload.

Reference librarians are on average satisfied with their work. They are always polite and compliant towards users. They cope with stress by sports or different relaxation methods.

Library managers tend to help to reduce the stress level of the reference work to some extent but reference librarians would be more pleased if the relationships between them and the managers would be better and the whole atmosphere would not be so tense. Better work organization in libraries and less bureaucracy would also contribute to a lower level of stress. On the other side there are also reference librarians who do not experience stress when they are at work.
In the opinion of the author the managers and the librarians should be much more connected, the librarians and the managers should be further educated about stress and burnout and the solutions for reduction or even elimination of both. Reference librarians should have a workload, which is in accordance with their abilities, and the work tasks should be much more evenly distributed.

To reduce stressfulness of reference service and to improve the present situation in the libraries further proper education in the areas of professional work and stress management must be provided. Free sport activities, excursions or courses for preparing healthy food for example are just a few factors that can lessen the stress level of the librarians and also encourage socializing between co-workers and managers.

Furthermore, librarians should regularly be surveyed about their level of satisfaction with their work, problems that occur when conducting reference work etc. to get the whole picture of the present situation in the reference service.

6.1 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The objective of the survey was to find out if reference librarians in special, academic and public libraries in Slovenia work under stress. The results of the survey had raised many new questions, which can be the basis of further research.

Research could be done in all types of libraries in Slovenia including school libraries and the results could be compared. It would be interesting to find out if reference librarians in school libraries really are the most stressed. Or the same survey that was already done in school libraries can be done in other three types of libraries and then the results could be compared.

A further study could be done in all types of libraries and in a deeper psychological way, maybe MBI or some other psychological questionnaire could be used. Such study could be more thorough when it comes to reference librarian’s feelings and emotions. New research could be done only on stress or only on burnout among reference librarians in Slovenia.
There was a project called Healthy and vital in the public sector in 2015-2016 in Slovenia. The purpose of the project was to examine the health situation of employees in the public service and to educate them how to improve their physical (and parallel also psychological) health. Librarians were not included in the pilot project. Similar project could therefore also be done in libraries.
7 REFERENCES

Abram, S. (2009). We are the profession that makes the difference. *Information Outlook*. Vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 36-37.


7.1 OTHER USED SOURCES


8 APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for reference librarians

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Polonca Belej, and I am a part-time student of Librarianship at the Department of Library and Information Science and Book Studies at the Faculty of Arts. I am writing my Master's Thesis entitled Stress and Burnout among Reference Librarians in Public, Higher Education/University and Special Libraries in Slovenia. I chose this topic because I would like to refute (or confirm) the myth that working as a reference librarian is not stressful.

I am kindly asking you to answer the questions in my questionnaire about the stress you face when doing reference work. The questionnaire is aimed at librarians who deal with library users as a part of their job so I am also asking you to forward this questionnaire to your colleagues who do such work. The questionnaire is completely anonymous. The results will be used in my Master's Thesis.

Thank you for your time and the willingness to answer the questionnaire.

To access the questionnaire, please follow the link: https://www.1ka.si/a/50855

Kind regards,
Polonca Belej

What type of library do you work at?

- ☐ Public library
- ☐ Higher education / university library
- ☐ Special library

Do you only do reference work or do you also have other responsibilities (e.g. acquisition, cataloguing, loan, etc.)?

- ☐ reference work only
- ☐ reference work and other responsibilities

Level of satisfaction with your position and/or the work you do?

- ☐ low
- ☐ medium
- ☐ high

How often do you encounter stress at your workplace?

- ☐ never
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ frequently
- ☐ very frequently
- ☐ always
In your opinion, which area of reference work causes the most stress?

- [ ] dealing with users
- [ ] work environment
- [ ] technology
- [ ] relations between co-workers
- [ ] other

Evaluate how stressful reference work is for you.
Enter a score from 1 (very stressful) to 5 (not stressful at all)


In your opinion, which professions are less stressful than being a reference librarian?
Multiple answers possible.

- [ ] doctor
- [ ] teacher
- [ ] miner
- [ ] farmer
- [ ] clerk
- [ ] manager
- [ ] lawyer
- [ ] dentist
- [ ] nurse
- [ ] other

In your opinion, which professions are more stressful than being a reference librarian?
Multiple answers possible.

- [ ] doctor
- [ ] teacher
- [ ] miner
- [ ] farmer
- [ ] clerk
- [ ] manager
- [ ] lawyer
- [ ] dentist
- [ ] nurse
- [ ] other

Do you think that stress at your workplace could lead to burnout?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
In your opinion, what causes burnout at your workplace?

Multiple answers possible.

- lots of work
- problematic users
- poor work organization
- management
- other

With regards to your work situation, please evaluate the following statements:

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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Very frequently</th>
<th>Always</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know how to say no (e.g. I don't take on additional work if my work schedule is already completely full)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I go to work even if I fall ill</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I need help, I ask for it</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I am stressed, I tell my co-workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>I attend conferences and workshops in the area of librarianship to keep up with new trends</td>
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<tr>
<td>I manage my working time according to the tasks I work on</td>
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<tr>
<td>When it comes to work, I set goals I can achieve for myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>When working with users, I am always polite and helpful</td>
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<tr>
<td>When working with users, I take ‘hard’ cases to heart</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stressful situations when working with users are reflected in my attitude towards them</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am a positive person and live by this principle</td>
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<tr>
<td>I try to improve the environment I work in (create a homely environment, warm atmosphere, accessibility, etc.)</td>
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<td>Sometimes I deal with routine tasks in a different way</td>
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Impact of work on your physical and emotional well-being:

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<tr>
<td>Do you feel physically and emotionally exhausted?</td>
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<td>Do you have negative thoughts with regards to your job?</td>
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<td>Do you think you're impatient when dealing with other people?</td>
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<td>Do you think about problems at work when you're at home?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do small problems easily upset you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel like your co-workers don't understand and respect you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel like you have nobody to talk to about your problems?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel like you are less productive at work</td>
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than you should be?
Are you always under pressure to prove yourself?

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Does your work represent a burden to you?

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Do you feel like you work for the wrong organization and/or do the wrong job?

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Do you find certain tasks frustrating?

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Do the politics of your organization or the bureaucracy frustrate you so that you cannot do your job well?

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Are you doing significantly more work than you are capable of doing?

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Do you think that you don't have enough time to plan your work?

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**Impact of work on life and your level of satisfaction in general:**

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I am satisfied with my life

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I am satisfied with the work I do

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To reduce stress, I use relaxation techniques (e.g. meditation, aromatherapy, etc.)

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In my spare time, I know how to take time for myself and remove myself from anything that I find stressful

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I exercise regularly

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I am frequently tired and unmotivated

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My partner supports me

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I often miss work due to illness

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When I have problems, I have trouble sleeping

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I find it hard to coordinate work and family life

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I eat healthily

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**How does your library's management contribute towards reducing the stress level of your work?**

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Encourages positive work relations

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Gives everyone as much work as they can manage

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Supports and ensures employee equality

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Sets realistic goals that employees can achieve

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Clearly defines the boundaries of authority and responsibility

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Leaves a certain level of independence to the employee

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Creates a work atmosphere that both employees and management benefit from

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Enables employees to participate in various sports activities

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</table>
BELEJ, P. Stress and Burnout among Reference Librarians in Slovenia. Master's thesis. Faculty of Arts, Department of Library and Information Science and Book Studies, 2017

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<tr>
<td>Enables the employees to 'circulate' so that they are not at the same work position all the time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourages support and mentorship among employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employees receive positive feedback and praise for a job well done</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employees receive negative feedback and criticism for a poorly executed job</td>
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How would you reduce stress in your work situation?

Do you use any methods to reduce/eliminate stress?
Multiple answers possible.

- Use of natural herbs or homeopathy
- Aromatherapy
- Change of diet
- Reducing or stopping smoking
- Reducing or stopping alcohol or coffee consumption
- Sports
- Relaxation techniques (e.g. yoga, meditation, tai chi, etc.)
- Psychotherapy
- Other

Gender:

- Male
- Female

Please indicate your age group.

- 25 or under
- from 26 to 35
- from 36 to 45
- from 46 to 55
- over 56

Highest degree of education completed

- level V (matura/A-levels)
- level VI (higher vocational education)
- level VII (university degree)
- Master’s degree (Pre-Bologna)
- Doctorate
Appendix 2: Questionnaire for library managers

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Polonca Belej, and I am a part-time student of Librarianship at the Department of Library and Information Science and Book Studies at the Faculty of Arts. I am writing my Master’s Thesis entitled Stress and Burnout among Reference Librarians in Public, Higher Education/University and Special Libraries in Slovenia. I chose this topic because I would like to refute (or confirm) the myth that working as a reference librarian is not stressful. I would also like to find out what library managers think about the stress perceived by reference librarians at work.

I am kindly asking you to answer the questions in my questionnaire. The questionnaire is aimed at library managers and is completely anonymous. The results will be used in my Master’s Thesis.

Thank you for your time and the willingness to answer the questionnaire.

To access the questionnaire, please follow the link: https://www.1ka.si/a/51467

Kind regards,

Polonca Belej

What type of library are you manager of?

☐ Public library
☐ Higher education / university library
☐ Special library

Number of employed librarians in the library:

☐ One
☐ More than one

Do you think that work of reference librarians is stressful?

☐ Yes
☐ No

In your opinion, how stressful is the work of a reference librarian?
Enter a score from 1 (very stressful) to 5 (not stressful at all)

In your opinion, which professions are less stressful than being a reference librarian?
Multiple answers possible

☐ Doctor
☐ Teacher
☐ Miner
☐ Farmer
☐ Clerk
In your opinion, which professions are more stressful than being a reference librarian?  
Multiple answers possible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miner</td>
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<td>Farmer</td>
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<td>Clerk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lawyer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dentist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In your opinion, which area of reference work causes the most stress?

- Dealing with users
- Work environment
- Technology
- Relations between co-workers
- Other

How do you as a library's manager contribute towards reducing the stress level of the reference librarian's work?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage positive work relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give everyone as much work as they can manage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support and ensure employee equality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Set realistic goals that employees can achieve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clearly define the boundaries of authority and responsibility</td>
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<td>Leave a certain level of independence to the employee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create a work atmosphere that both employees and management benefit from</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enable employees to participate in various sports activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enable the employees to 'circulate' so that they are not at the same position all the time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage support and mentorship among employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employees receive positive feedback and praise for a job well done</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employees receive negative feedback and criticism for a poorly executed job</td>
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</table>
Do you think that stress at the workplace of the reference librarian could lead to burnout?

☐ Yes
☐ No

How do you act if there is a burnt-out reference librarian?

☐ Relieving him/her from the work load
☐ Redeployment to another working post (if it is possible)
☐ The employees »circulate«
☐ I have not had such a situation yet
☐ Other

Do you educate your employees on the topic of overcoming stress?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Gender:

☐ Male
☐ Female

Please indicate your age group?

☐ 25 and under
☐ from 26 to 35
☐ from 36 to 45
☐ from 46 to 55
☐ over 56

Highest degree of education completed

☐ level V (matura/A-levels)
☐ level VI (higher vocational education)
☐ level VII (university degree)
☐ Master’s degree (Pre-Bologna)
☐ Doctorate
Statement of authorship

I hereby declare that the proposed master’s thesis is in its entirety my own author work and that the used sources and literature are referenced in accordance with international standards and valid legislation.

Ljubljana, February 2017

Polonca Belej
Statement of the candidate

With my signature I ______ POLONCA BELEJ _____ declare that the content of the master’s thesis in printed and electronic form is identical and that it can be published on faculty’s website.

Date:

Candidate’s signature: