



BURNOUT IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES: A THREE-PART SERIES

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Burnout in Public Libraries on Niche Academy uses first-person narratives to explore causes of burnout among public library workers and multiple approaches to relieve it. It delivers perspective on U.S. and international stressors causing trauma and burnout for library staff. The series explores research within librarianship and other professions on topics including:

- Moral panics driving materials challenges
- Workplace wellness
- A trauma-informed approach to library services

This series includes three private, fillable exercises:

- Life Enjoyment Inventory
- Measuring Your Burnout Risks (Copenhagen Burnout Inventory)
- Imagine Your Best Possible Future

This three-part series includes the lived experiences of directors, librarians, and frontline staff who shared their stories with us over more than a dozen interviews. We also wish to thank the nurse and social workers who contributed to this course.

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Part One: BURNOUT AND MATERIALS CHALLENGES

Part One addresses the physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion that can lead to personal burnout in a library environment. The example we use is burnout caused by materials challenges.

Learning Objectives

- Recognize the symptoms of personal burnout and identify strategies that can help relieve it.
- Compare how moral panics operated during three periods of book banning and materials challenges over a 150-year period.
- Describe the ALA Library Bill of Rights statement on diverse collections.
- Summarize the legal environment for public libraries across the U.S.
- Complete a private, fillable Life Enjoyment Inventory that assists in counterbalancing fatigue and exhaustion by maintaining space for self-identified values- and pleasure-driven activities.



Our guest is Bryonna Barton, a library director who experienced public ostracism and brutal social media attacks during a period of materials challenges at the Hillsdale Community Library. The course covers how moral panics such as the ones we are facing now have operated historically in multiple countries.

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Part Two: BURNOUT AND WORKPLACE WELLNESS

In Part Two, our guest is a library director who fought to maintain professional standards and employee wellness during a financial crisis at a rural library. This crisis made targets out of library workers and ended in the resignation of the staff.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognize the symptoms of workplace-related burnout and identify institutional and individual strategies that can help to relieve it.
- Recognize how vocational awe and emotional and invisible labor contribute to burnout.
- Compare U.S. and international studies of librarian burnout.
- Summarize personal and institutional factors that impact workplace wellness.
- Complete the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory to determine your own burnout risk.



This module examines Bobbi Newman's (MLIS, MA) work on library wellness and the Surgeon General's framework for workplace mental health and well-being. The module also looks at how vocational awe and emotional and invisible labor can undermine workplace wellness.

Included in this module are examinations of burnout in U.S. libraries, including the Indiana Public Library Study and the OhioNet Wellness Study. International studies of burnout in libraries include Greece, Iran, Sweden, and Russia.

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Part 3: BURNOUT AND A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

Part Three addresses secondary trauma stress, compassion fatigue, depersonalization, cynicism, and the feeling that staff are losing their ability to have a constructive impact due to patron-related burnout. The setting is the downtown hub of an urban library system.

Learning Objectives

- Identify the symptoms of patron-related burnout and ways to relieve them.
- Describe how a trauma-informed service model operates to respect both library workers and patrons.
- Compare burnout coping strategies used in the fields of nursing, teaching, and social work.
- Articulate your best possible future to develop a positive focus on how you can achieve that future and increase your sense of control over your occupational life.



Our first guest is social worker Laura Ray, who experienced intermittent homelessness for two decades. Our second guest is the public services manager for the downtown hub of an urban library system. Their interwoven stories focus on a trauma-informed approach.

Burnout is a hazard for all helping professions. This module provides perspective on the measures that nurses, teachers, and social workers take to combat patron-related burnout.

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ABOUT OUR TEAM



Sonya Schryer Norris, MLIS, Founder and Instructional Designer, Plum Librarian LLC. Sonya has over 26 years in libraries and finds her greatest professional satisfaction in providing continuing education solutions for library staff. Her 35+ courses on Niche Academy have been adopted in all 50 states and internationally. She has been a popular national speaker and writer for two decades. Sonya is a proud third-generation Michigan library worker.

Co-author and Senior Researcher: Ann Marie Sanders, MLS, MA. Ann is a former Statewide Continuing Education Coordinator (Michigan), consultant, and library director. She has over 40 years of diverse library experience including state, public, academic, and school library work. Ann has served on, and worked with, a variety of non-profit boards including the Depository Council to the Public Printer of the United States.

Independent Consultant Ericka Brunson-Rochette, MLIS, holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Creative Writing from Kansas State University, and a Master of Library and Information Science degree from Emporia State University. She currently serves as the immediate past president of the Oregon Library Association.

Thank you to our guest speakers and to those who wish to remain anonymous. This series includes the lived experiences of directors, librarians, and frontline staff who shared their stories with us over more than a dozen interviews. We also wish to thank the nurse and social workers who contributed to this course.