Darcy Del Bosque and Susie Skarl

Keeping workplace burnout at bay

Online coping and prevention resources

Workplace burnout has been defined as ". . . a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy."[1] It has been an ongoing issue among workers, especially in the helping professions, for decades. Librarianship has not escaped the problem, with rapidly changing jobs, increasing workloads due to budget cuts, and frequent interactions with patrons, all leading to burnout.

This guide addresses burnout from multiple perspectives, covering both individual employees and organization-wide aspects. In addition to providing general resources for employees and managers and a sample of MOOCs, videos, and lectures, a section of this guide will focus on burnout information within the library profession. While this guide of online burnout websites is by no means comprehensive, it will provide resources from the last decade and a half that center upon occupational burnout issues, including definitions, symptoms, and prevention tactics.

Job burnout—Signs of burnout

• **Burnout Self-Test: Check Yourself for Burnout.** A 15-question self-test to determine your level of burnout and includes

links to resources about avoiding and recovering from burnout. *Access:* https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_08.htm.

• **Tell Tale Signs of Burnout: Do You Have Them?** This resource defines burnout and provides a list of symptoms, identifies how burnout manifests in early and late stages, and how it differs from general stress. Additionally, this resource provides a list of resources to assist with burnout problems. *Access:* https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/high-octane-women/201311/the-tell-tale-signs-burnout-do-you-have-them.

Occupational burnout—General

• **Burnout and the Brain.** Alexandra Michel provides a history of burnout, going back to the 1970s when it was first identified as a problem. As people become overwhelmed with unfulfillable demands of their position, it becomes difficult to cope, resulting in negativity and cynicism that often leads into personal, as well as professional, aspects of people's lives. She highlights numerous research studies on burnout, noting how burnout creates changes in the brain, how it impairs cognitive functioning, and how it can create inflammation throughout

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the body. Michel concludes by discussing research on reversing the impact of burnout, suggesting that there is potential for intervention to make a difference. *Access:* http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2016/february-16/burnout-and-the-brain.html.

• **Burnout Comes in Three Varieties.** The "Minds for Business: Psychological Science at Work" blog produced this entry about burnout, which addresses three different subtypes of burnout that were identified through a survey of 429 university employees. The three subtypes—overload, boredom, and worn-out—were all attributed to different, but equally ineffective, coping styles. It includes a link to a research article that discusses developing preventative therapies to overcome these weak coping skills. *Access:* http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/news/minds-business/burnout-comes-in-three-varieties.html.

• **Job Burnout.** Authors Christina Maslach, Wilmar B. Schaufeli, and Michael P. Leiter provide a critical analysis of what has been learned from the past 25 years of work on job burnout. Along with defining and providing the history of occupational burnout, the authors analyze issues such as situational factors, individual factors, and implications for intervention. *Access:* http://www.wilmarschaufeli.nl/publications/Schaufeli/154.pdf.

• **PubMed Health: Depression, What is Burnout Syndrome?** This short PubMed Health entry discusses how there is currently no clear definition of burnout and although there are a few questionnaires that help to diagnosis it, there is not a well-researched method to determine if someone has burnout. Along with providing an overview of current research on the signs and symptoms of burnout, the entry compares burnout with depression. *Access:* http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0072470/.

• **Reversing Burnout: How to Rekindle Your Passion for Your Work.** This article, written by Christina Maslach and Michael P. Leiter, appeared in *Stanford Social Innovation Review.* It acknowledges that burnout is more than an individual or an organizational problem, but rather a bad fit between the two groups. It provides a case study of two individuals, discussing how they were feeling at work and the steps they took to try and turn the situation around. It also defines six categories of burnout and suggests that individuals and organizations can use these as a framework to determine which specific problems are most prevalent and design interventions to alleviate some of the problems. *Access:* http://ssir.org/articles/entry/reversing_burnimout.

Burnout—MOOC, video, lectures, and statistics

• **Mental Health Studies—Understanding Behaviour, Burnout *and* Depression.** ALISON, an online learning community that provides access to education resources to help build workplace skills, provides a short unit on mental health studies that includes a module on burnout. It defines burnout and discusses some of its causes. A free account is required to use the resources. *Access:* https://alison.com/courses/Mental-Health-Studies-Understanding-Behaviour-Burnout-and-Depression/content.

• **Statistics and Facts about Stress and Burnout.** Thus far, there are very few statistics about workplace burnout. Statista has collected some quick facts and figures about the topic. They also provide a link to a dossier, which compiles the most important statistics about burnout and can be downloaded in PowerPoint or PDF. *Access:* http://www.statista.com/topics/2099/stress-and-burnout/.

• **TED: Talks for When You Feel Totally Burned Out.** This YouTube playlist features ten TED talks that can help the burned out regain some enthusiasm. Segment topics vary from mindfulness, to getting in the flow, to the power of taking time off. Across all of the segments is a theme to be present, embrace stillness, and find balance. The themes of detaching suffering from creativity, reframing how you view stress, and centering on positivity in the process instead of emphasizing outcomes are also explored. *Access:* https://www.ted.com/playlists/245/talks_for_when_you_feel_totall.

• **Thriving in Science Lecture: Understanding Burnout, Christina Maslach December 10, 2014.** This recorded lecture features Christina Maslach, a professor from UC-Berkeley and a pioneer in research about burnout. She speaks about the costs of burnout from both an economic and health perspective, the reasons that often lead to burnout, and workplace solutions to help with burnout issues with employees. *Access:* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kLPyV8lBbs.

Burnout prevention

• **10 Signs You're Burning Out—And What To Do About It.** Lisa M. Gery provides her personal story about burnout in *Forbes,* along with discussing the signs of burnout and providing strategies for overcoming the problem. *Access:* http://www.forbes.com/sites/learnvest/2013/04/01/10-signs-youre-burning-out-and-what-to-do-about-it/#4530d6c95e0.

• **11 Ways to Avoid Burnout.** Sasha VanHoven writes about strategies to cope with, treat, and prevent burnout. Each of the 11 suggestions includes a link to an article, so further information can be gathered on the topic. *Access:* http://99u.com/articles/24201/11-ways-to-avoid-burnout.

• **How to Overcome Burnout and Stay Motivated.** In her *Harvard Review* article, Rebecca Knight writes about strategies to overcome burnout. She recommends taking breaks throughout the workday, putting away digital devices, engaging in interesting activities during off-time, and determining why your job is meaningful. She also presents two case studies illustrating real-life approaches towards overcoming burnout. *Access:* https://hbr.org/2015/04/how-to-overcome-burnout-and-stay-motivated.

Organizational response

• **Burnout Response.** Workplace Strategies for Mental Health, an initiative of the Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace, wrote this piece on burnout, which is geared towards an organizational response to the issue. Along with discussing burnout symptoms of employees, the resource provides strategies to reduce workplace stress, in turn lowering the potential for burnout, and encourages creating a workplace plan to support those who have been identified as suffering from burnout. *Access:* https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/managing-workplace-issues/burnout-response.

• **How to Prevent Employee Burnout.** The Kissmetrics blog provides a definition of burnout and discusses some of its causes. It also defines seven effects of burned out employees. More importantly, this blog entry discusses 30 things that organizations can do to combat burnout in employees. *Access:* https://blog.kissmetrics.com/prevent-employee-burnout/.

• **Low Staff Morale and Burnout: Causes and Solutions.** Chungsup Lee, Jarrod Scheunemann, Robin Hall, and Laura Payne created this resource for the Office of Recreation and Park Resources at the University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign. It defines burnout and provides some possible causes of it. It also discusses four potential solutions to burnout, which include problem-focused coping, emotional-focused coping, relationship-focused coping, and lifestyle-coping. The report then discusses low staff morale and provides potential approaches to combat the problem. *Access:* https://illinois.edu/lb/files/2012/06/01/39974.pdf.

- **Preventing Job Burnout in Your Organization.** Mannaz, a European leadership organization, provides an interview with Christina Maslach, a leader in burnout research. The interview puts a spotlight on what organizations can do to prevent employee burnout. Maslach provides six areas (workload, control, reward and recognition, workplace community, fairness, and conflict of values) that are often a mismatch between employees and organizations, which often leads to burnout. These six areas provide a framework for organizations to review in order to pinpoint where they need to make improvements to avoid potential problems with burnout. *Access:* http://www.mannaz.com/en/insights/preventing-job-burnout-in-your-organization/.

- **Strategic Organizational Responses to Workplace Stress, Burnout and Trauma.** This workshop report, written by Patricia M. Fisher, for the Conference Board of Canada Council on Workplace Health and Wellness, draws attention to stress in the workplace and discusses the costs to business. It provides risk and resiliency factors for both organizations and individuals and then discusses strategic approaches to the problem. Additionally, it provides a case study from the Community Corrections Division of the British Columbia Ministry of Public Safety and Security. *Access:* https://www.fisherandassociates.org/pdf/StrategicOrgResponses_03.pdf.

Workplace burnout in the library profession

- **A Passion Deficit: Occupational Burnout and the New Librarian: A Recommendation Report.** Following a review of the literature, author Linda A. Christian determines the causes and effects of occupational burnout among new librarians and recommends administrative and personal techniques to prevent the escalation of this issue within the profession. She offers recommendations for library school instructors and for library managers to help prevent burnout in newly hired librarians. *Access:* http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/cgi

/viewcontent.cgi?article=1533&context=seln.

- **Burnout and Job Engagement among Business Librarians.** Author Kevin Harwell presents results from a survey academic and public business librarians about incidence of burnout and job engagement in their jobs. The study suggests that burnout can be reduced by reducing work overload, emotional demands, and work-home interference by increasing job autonomy, learning opportunities, social support, and performance feedback. *Access:* https://journals.tdl.org/llm/index.php/llm/article/viewFile/2084/6218.

- **Burnout in Academic Libraries.** Julie Huprich sheds light on the following questions: What is burnout? What causes burnout? What does this mean for academic libraries? What can I do to prevent burnout in my academic library? *Access:* http://ala-apa.org/newsletter/2007/10/16/burnout-in-academic-libraries/.

- **Letters to a Young Librarian.** Jessica Olin, library director at Wesley College, has created a web resource that offers advice to those who are new (or even not so new) to librarianship. The blog posts cover a wide variety of academic librarian issues and guidance from the author and guest contributors on topics such as résumés and interviewing, tenure and academic freedom, and leadership. In addition to these issues, this site addresses the topic of burnout in the library field and offers ways to prevent it (such as engaging in professional development on a regular basis), maintaining a healthy lifestyle (with exercise, sleep, and healthy foods), and enjoying a life away from the library world. *Access:* http://letterstoayounglibrarian.blogspot.com/.

- **Librarianburnout.com.** Librarian Maria Accardi has created a blog for librarians to share stories about their burnout experiences. In addition to Accardi's and guest bloggers' insights, the blog analyzes collected stories, identifies common themes, and situates them in the context of discussion of the literature of the library profession. Discussion topics in-

information literacy skills were relevant to the work of meteorology students. Stakeholders perceived that academic librarians could play a future role in general instruction, but that they would have to overcome obstacles to be involved in data information literacy instruction. For librarians to enter this domain, they would need to improve their technical skills, enhance their discipline-specific knowledge, or rely on collaborations. The significance of these findings was limited by the modest target population under examination. Consequently, the results were strongly linked to the specific setting. Further studies would be necessary to determine their generalizability.

As the incoming editor of *College & Research Libraries,* I feel strongly that this is the most critical charge for academic libraries—to address these questions and sociopolitical issues along with playing a significant part in the dialogues that are shaping higher education.

It is an honor to be a part of publishing such significant research in librarianship that reflects this role, and I am humbled to follow in the footsteps of those great editors of *College & Research Libraries* who have come before me. Most recently, Scott Walter, who has provided innovative leadership for the journal responsive to emerging trends in scholarly communication, and the editors emeritus, who have helped shaped scholarship in the profession and the prestigious and influential journal that *C&RL* has become:

1939-1941 A. F. Kuhlman
1941-1948 Carl M. White
1948-1962 Maurice F. Tauber
1962-1963 Richard Harwell
1963-1969 David Kaser
1969-1974 Richard M. Dougherty
1974-1980 Richard D. Johnson
1980-1984 C. James Schmidt
1984-1990 Charles Martell
1990-1996 Gloriana St. Clair
1996-2002 Donald E. Riggs
2002-2008 William Gray Potter
2008–2011 Joseph Branin
2012--2016 Scott Walter 🐾

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clude work-life balance, mindfulness, workplace rejection, mental health issues, and burnout prevention. *Access:* https://librarianburnout.com/.

• **Library Burnout: Causes, Symptoms, Solutions.** This article, written by Christine Martin, highlights burnout symptoms (such as low productivity, inability to concentrate, and increased absenteeism) and causes (including budget pressures, heavy workloads, and few opportunities for advancement) in the library profession. Moreover, the article also offers strategies and tips for employees (i.e., not taking work home) and managers (i.e., being an advocate for staff) to prevent burnout before it becomes a serious problem. Martin also includes a list of further reading materials on the issue and an inventory that readers can take to determine if they are at risk for burn-out. *Access:* http://ala-apa.org/newsletter/2009/12/01/spotlight-2/.

• **Running on Empty: Dealing with Burnout in the Library Setting.** Although this article was written over ten years ago, it is still relevant to today's library professionals. Authors Tim and Zahra M. Baird note that the very nature of library work, including demands for our services, heavy workloads, and shifts in priorities, predisposes us to burnout. The authors recommend personal and work strategies, along with professional solutions and a burnout maintenance plan for library staff members. *Access:* http://www.liscareer.com/baird_burnout.htm.

Note

1. Christina Maslach, Wilmar B. Schaufeli, and Michael P. Leiter, "Job burnout," *Annual Review of Psychology* 2001, vol. 52. 🐾