

**The image of the Public library, librarians and librarianship according to the users in community settlements in comparison to cities /**  
Israela Yablonka

**Abstract**

This study is intended to examine the image of public libraries, librarians and the entire profession among people attending public libraries in communal settlements as compared to such image among the urban population. A question arises whether or not relationship exists between the library usage and the library and librarians image, and whether or not that image varies with the type of settlement.

A hypothesis is proposed that in the communal settlements the library and the librarians enjoy higher esteem than their urban counterparts, and consequently, libraries in such settlements are more frequently visited than those in towns.

In the ancient world the library was highly respected. The importance of the libraries in the ancient world was expressed by the large and magnificent buildings housing them. The library of Alexandria, to mention one, was considered as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. In the ancient world an assortment of books was a love gift; the librarian was perceived as a guardian of a culture treasure-house. What is the image of the library and of the librarian today?

The present study examined the image of the public library, the public librarians and the entire profession as viewed by the library users in two types of settlements: communal settlements and urban settlements; an attempt was made to investigate the association between the type of library and the settlement (urban or communal) and the esteem accorded to the library and to librarianship.

We have attempted to verify whether in the communal settlements library users tend to higher appreciation of the public library, of the librarian and of the profession. We have assumed that in the communal settlement environment closer relationships is developed between the librarian and the community, and as a result, the profession and those practicing it enjoy better understanding and higher esteem.

The study also compared the librarians' profession image with that of a number of other professions, trying to identify variables affecting such image.

A questionnaire was designed to address the issues of the study; the questionnaire was formed in three parts: the first one was intended to collect data about library usage and about librarians and library image; the second part was designed to gauge appreciation (by the study participants) of the

profession prestige and education required, as compared to those of a number of other professions; the third part was formulated to examine five aspects of the participants' perception of the librarian in comparison to other professionals: level of interest inherent in the profession, image of the profession on the masculine-feminine scale, level of remuneration of each profession, amount of learning required by the various professions, and general esteem accorded to each profession.

The study findings clearly indicate that in the communal settlements status of the public library, and that of the librarian, are higher than those in the urban environment, and the level of library attendance in such settlements is higher than that experienced in the cities. We have also identified a relationship between the library and the librarians' image and the usage frequency.

The study reveals that in both types of settlement, in all communities, all study participant's accord great importance to the public library existence. However, the two types of settlements differ significantly in their perception of the public library and the librarian's image.

Library callers in the communal settlements are more aware of the possibilities offered by the library, they use it more extensively and they visit it more frequently than their urban counterparts; urban patrons visit the library on "as needed" basis. It is interesting to note that the urban participants tend to see the public library as a social rendezvous and a recreation site. This finding warrants the attention of urban public library managers.

The perception of the librarian image differs significantly between the two types of settlement. It was found that study participants in the communal settlements rely on their librarians in selecting the library collection, they consult with them frequently on the proper book choice; they do not believe that the librarian may be replaced adequately by a computer (higher proportion of the city dwellers believe that the librarian can be replaced by the computer), and they hold their librarians' learning in high esteem. A higher ratio of the study participants in the communal settlements believe that librarians have, and should have, high academic education.

The test we have performed on the librarianship as a profession shows that, in comparison with other professions included in the study, the participants in the communal settlements rank the librarianship higher than their urban counterparts; they consider the profession to be more prestigious and calling for broader schooling. The communal settlements participants hold the librarian in a higher esteem, insofar as his/hers prestige and education are considered, than their urban colleagues.

The questionnaires testing the general image of the various professions (according to certain criteria), reveal that the study participants view the physicist as the top ranking professional and the teacher as the lowest one; librarians are graded one rank above the teachers.

The librarianship was ranked by all study participants as a relatively interesting profession, calling for rather extensive learning. Two criteria ranked librarianship last on the professions listing: librarianship is considered as the most feminine profession and the salary paid to the librarian is the lowest.

A difference between the two study groups was identified in ranking the various professions according to a number of criteria: level of interest, feminine or masculine predominance and quality of remuneration. The only significant divergence between the two groups was encountered in regard to the librarian and to the perception of the profession as interesting; the communal settlements consider the librarianship as a more interesting profession than the urban communities do.

The study examined a number of variables affecting the profession image. A significant correlation was found between the profession esteem, and the level of salaries paid, perception of profession as interesting, and scope of education required. No linkage was detected between the feminine image of the profession and its general esteem and prestige.

A connection was found between perception of the profession as interesting and considering the library as an educational institution.

A significant relationship was revealed between library esteem and its educational value and the number of visits paid. A significant linking was found between high librarianship esteem and perception of the profession as interesting, and the library usage; high librarianship esteem promotes library's esteem and vice-versa.

As mentioned above, the study reveals higher librarian and public library standing and more extensive usage of libraries within the communal settlements.

The study indeed proves that relationship exists between the type of settlement – communal or urban – and the librarian and library image; the findings certainly show that the public library and the librarians enjoy higher esteem among the communal settlement library patrons.

System number: 000406057

יבל.תד תשנ"ח 027.4