Retirement, Retention, and Recruitment in Colorado Libraries: The 3Rs Study Revisited

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ABSTRACT

Prompted by more than a decade of discussion about the "graying" of the library profession, the Library Research Service (LRS) undertook the study: Retirement, Retention, and Recruitment: The Future of Librarianship in Colorado (3Rs). During the last quarter of 2003, 1,241 librarians, paraprofessionals, library and information science (LIS) students, and independent information professionals from all over the state responded to a voluntary online survey asking them about their careers, their workplaces, and their attitudes about librarianship. Respondents included both library workers who planned to retire within the next five years and those who did not. The study showed that more than 20 percent of responding librarians expected to retire within the next five years, and of all responding school librarians almost half indicated plans to retire by the end of 2008. When asked about the effect of the 2001–2 downturn in the economy on their retirement plans, nearly half of all respondents (48 percent) indicated it had no effect. However, more than one in ten (11 percent) said they planned to retire later because of economic conditions. In 2009, with the country in the worst recession in generations, retirement plans continue to be affected. This article will discuss the 2003 study, as well as current findings from reader polls conducted by LRS.

INTRODUCTION

As the baby boomers retire, librarianship, like many other professions, anticipates a seismic shift in the demographics of its workforce. This expected wave of retirements—or the "graying" of librarianship—has been a topic of discussion for decades and many organizations are concerned

about losing some of their most experienced workers. Conversely, this generational shift could also mean career opportunities for younger librarians. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Despite slower-than-average projected employment growth, job opportunities [for librarians] are still expected to be favorable because a large number of librarians are expected to retire in the coming decade" (*Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2008–09).

To examine this topic in greater detail, the Library Research Service (LRS), a unit of the Colorado State Library, undertook the Retirement, Retention, and Recruitment: The Future of Librarianship in Colorado (3Rs) study. As identified in the title, the research focused on three different, but related, angles of library staffing—retirement, retention, and recruitment.

Methodology

Data for this study were gathered using an online questionnaire developed by LRS staff and a project advisory panel comprised of representatives from all library types and library information science (LIS) students. The survey of library workers was conducted between October 15 and November 30, 2003. Announcements about the survey appeared on multiple library listservs and websites for professional organizations, libraries, and LRS. To increase the response rate, the "It's All About You" campaign promoted the study through various channels including direct mail, giveaways, and personal contacts with stakeholders.

Of the estimated 4,520 workers employed in 2003 by Colorado's academic, public, and school libraries, 1,159 (26 percent) responded to the survey. Represented in the response group were all types of libraries (academic, public, school, and special), a variety of specialty areas (administration, public services, technical services, generalist, and other), all regions of the state (Front Range, Mountains, Western Slope, and Eastern Plains), and metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas.

The sample for this study was self-selected, making it a nonprobability sample. The lack of appropriate sampling frames prevented either random or systematic sampling. Moreover, the personal nature of many of the questions precluded tracking individual respondents. Although all library types were represented, public library workers overall were somewhat overrepresented (63 percent of the sample, 47 percent of the universe) compared to their academic (17 percent versus 25 percent) and school (20 percent versus 29 percent) library counterparts.

Respondents were asked several demographic questions, as well as a career status question in order to classify them in the three main study areas—retirement, recruitment, or retention. In addition, respondents were classified by their library credentials. Librarians—sometimes called professional or credentialed librarians—were defined as those individuals

with a master's degree in library and information science or equivalent, and/or school library media endorsement. Paraprofessionals were those respondents working in a library without advanced library degrees or related credentials. Respondents classified as students identified themselves as currently pursuing a master's degree in library and information science or a school library media endorsement.

RETIREMENTS

In today's work environment it is possible to have many careers in a lifetime, and retirement may mean leaving the workforce, starting a second career, or staying in the same profession but in a part-time or consulting position. In addition, many retirees are ignoring the traditional retirement age of sixty-five and retiring earlier or even later. Because it has become a broad, flexible concept, retirement was defined by the survey respondents themselves.

Retirees: Selected Demographics

At the time of the survey, more than one in five responding credentialed librarians (21 percent) planned to retire within the next five years, that is, between late 2003 and the end of 2008. This is the group referred to throughout the study as "retiring librarians." Less than three-quarters (71 percent) of these retiring librarians were age fifty-five or older at the time of the study. The remaining 29 percent were between the ages of forty-five and fifty-four. This means that in late 2003, nearly one in three responding librarians with imminent plans to retire from the profession were planning to do so before age sixty.

According to the study, librarians from all types of libraries were planning to retire, but school librarians planned to retire in far greater percentages. Nearly half of all responding school librarians (47 percent) indicated they planned to retire within five years. This compares to 10 percent of academic, 15 percent of public, and 21 percent of special librarians planning to retire.

This dramatically high percentage of imminent retirements reported by school librarians is probably largely explained by the age demographics of school versus other types of responding librarians. Overall, three out of ten (29 percent) responding librarians were age fifty-five or over. Of school librarian respondents, more than two out of five (42 percent) were age fifty-five or over. There could be an unidentified response bias that explains the dramatically higher percentages of imminent retirees, or older librarians (i.e., age fifty-five or over), among this study's school library respondents. However, feedback from the field suggests that school librarians do fall into an older age demographic and are likely to be closer to retirement.

Librarians identified a number of factors as critical or very important in making their decision about when to retire. Predictably, personal finances

(48 percent), age (44 percent), and health benefits (42 percent) were the weightiest factors for retiring librarians. On the other hand, this same group most frequently cited relocation (76 percent) and career change (73 percent) as the factors that were not very or not at all important.

Librarian Retirements: Impact on Organizations and the Profession
Obviously, as these librarians retire they will take years of experience with them. Nearly two-thirds of responding retiring librarians had over twenty years of experience (61 percent) and another quarter had eleven to twenty years of experience (26 percent). That means nearly nine out of ten (87 percent) responding retirees had eleven or more years of experience. Correspondingly, these retirees have considerable supervisory experience with nearly three in four (72 percent) supervising staff and/or volunteers.

For the purposes of this study, four primary areas of responsibility were identified. For retiring librarians, 42 percent were generalists (lone libraries or one of a small staff), 21 percent were in administration, 18 percent were in public services, and 11 percent were in technical services. Eight percent indicated they had "other" areas of responsibilities including teaching, information literacy instruction, literacy, and archives. Also identified by respondents were selected library specialties, including reference services (48 percent), school/library media (39 percent), cataloging (31 percent), electronic resources (31 percent), and information technology (29 percent). Fewer than one in ten respondents indicated public library youth services (9 percent), archives (9 percent), or knowledge management—special libraries only (7 percent).

In addition to years of library work experience, retiring librarians will take considerable leadership experience with them when they leave their jobs. Eight out of ten retiring librarians reported being involved in the professional library community beyond their job roles. The most cited leadership roles included workshop presenter (39 percent), grant reader/writer (34 percent), library student mentor (34 percent), committee member/chair (27 percent), library science teacher/trainer (25 percent), and book/resource reviewer (24 percent).

Without considerable succession planning, libraries stand to lose professional and institutional memory that will be missed by library and school boards; directors, principals, and deans; professional and paraprofessional staff; and, ultimately, patrons. However, many libraries may find they have at least some latitude in replacing retirees, as many librarians plan to work part-time or on-call (52 percent), volunteer at a library (44 percent), or work as consultants (16 percent) after they retire. Many also plan to stay involved in the profession by serving on library boards or committees (19 percent); staying active in professional organizations (16 percent); and writing, teaching, and/or mentoring (7 percent).

In spite of the brain-drain the retirements could bring, many retiring librarians did not necessarily think their institutions would hire credentialed librarians to fill vacancies. When asked how they expect their current position to be filled when they left, half of retiring librarians did not assume their position would be filled by someone who met similar (48 percent) or higher education (2 percent) requirements. One in six indicated their former position was likely to be filled by someone with lower education requirements (17 percent). Nearly one in five said the position would be changed—either reorganized/combined with another position (12 percent) or eliminated (7 percent). One in seven did not know what to expect to happen to their position after they retired (14 percent).

RETENTION

Of the respondents to the survey, the largest group (42 percent) consisted of those classified as incumbent librarians. These were people who had a graduate degree in librarianship, an allied field, or school library media endorsement and who did not plan to retire within five years of completing the survey. In other words, this "retention" group consisted of the librarians most immersed in the profession—they were neither library science students, nor were they nearing retirement. This group had the biggest current investment in the profession, and the most at stake as libraries attempt to remain relevant and vibrant in a changing world.

Retention: Selected Demographics

As implied by the now popular term, the *graying* of the library profession can be seen in the age distribution of the incumbent librarians. Nearly two-thirds of this response group were forty-five years of age or older, with 19 percent fifty-five or older and 44 percent between forty-five and fifty-four. Incumbents came from all four library types: public (51 percent), academic (19 percent), special (16 percent), and school (14 percent). They also had various levels of library work experience spread fairly evenly over the four time categories of over twenty years experience (27 percent), eleven to twenty years (28 percent), six to ten years (20 percent), and one to five years (25 percent).

Retention: Future of the Position

Perhaps the most compelling sentiment expressed by this group can be found in their expectations of how their positions might change for their successors. Though the incumbent librarian view was not as negative as that shown by retiring librarians, nearly one-quarter of them felt that their position would undergo significant, adverse changes. Seven percent of incumbent librarians believed that their positions would be refilled with lower educational requirements. Furthermore, fully one in six (17 percent) expected their positions to be changed or downsized, with 11 percent believing their positions would be reorganized or combined with

another position, and another 6 percent feeling that their job would be eliminated altogether. Twelve percent of incumbent librarian respondents did not know what would happen to their position when they left it.

Several factors influenced how incumbent librarians responded to this question. Metropolitan status played a large role in the perceptions of what would become of these jobs. Respondents from nonmetropolitan areas were nearly four times as likely to expect their positions to be refilled with lower education requirements (19 versus 5 percent). Meanwhile, respondents from metropolitan areas were more likely to expect their positions to be reorganized or combined (12 versus 7 percent), and much more likely to report that they did not know what would happen to their positions (13 versus 4 percent).

Library type also played a significant role in defining expectations about the fate of respondents' positions. School libraries were overwhelmingly more likely to expect their position to be refilled with lower education requirements than those in other sectors, with 20 percent of responding school librarians expressing this concern, as opposed to no more than 6 percent from other sectors (academic, public, and special). Possibly because of the organizational structure of schools, only 1 percent of school librarians expected their positions to be reorganized or combined with another position, while over 10 percent of respondents in each of the other sectors felt this was likely. Special librarians showed the highest level of uncertainty about the future of their positions, with 15 percent responding that they did not know what would happen to their position when they left.

Retention: Individual Career Plans
Incumbent respondents were asked to identify factors that were most responsible for influencing them to remain with an organization. For these respondents, the most cited factor was feeling that they were fairly paid, with nearly half (47 percent) of this group selecting this option. Location (41 percent), variety of work (41 percent), responsive management (39 percent), and a collegial workplace (39 percent) played a part in this decision for roughly two out of five respondents. For the youngest librarians, one of the most important factors that would keep them in an organization was the opportunity for advancement, with 42 percent of respondents below the age of thirty selecting this option. This rate dropped drastically as the respondents' age rose, with only 17 percent of librarians between thirty and forty-four years old stating that this is an influencing factor for them, and only 7 percent of those fifty-five and above feeling this way. Conversely, older incumbent librarians expressed a greater need for variety in their work. Nearly three-fifths (58 percent) of incumbent librarians fifty-five and older stated that variety of work played an important role in keeping them with an organization. This number declined steadily as

respondents' age fell, with only one in four respondents under the age of thirty claiming that this was an important factor for them.

Age also played a large part in expectations that incumbent librarians had for their careers. Respondents were asked whether they had plans to leave the library/information science field, with approximately one in ten (11 percent) incumbent librarians responding in the affirmative. The group that was most likely to plan to leave the field, at 16 percent of respondents, consisted of those between the ages of thirty and forty-four. This was nearly twice the rate of any other age group, with 9 percent of those between forty-five and fifty-four responding that they planned to leave the field, and 8 percent of librarians under the age of thirty stating such plans.

Younger librarians exhibited greater flexibility than their peers in geography. When asked where they expected to work, 90 percent of all incumbent librarians over the age of fifty-five, and 83 percent of those between forty-five and fifty-four, anticipated remaining in Colorado. On the other end of the spectrum, a third of respondents under the age of forty-five would leave the state for a better job or for personal reasons. Strikingly, one in five (21 percent) of librarians under the age of thirty *planned* to leave Colorado.

In addition to age, respondents' geographic plans were affected significantly by the type of library in which they worked. Again, school librarians responded quite differently than their peers in other sectors. They were by far the least likely group to plan on leaving Colorado, with only about one in ten foreseeing that as a possibility and only 1 percent stating that they planned to leave the state. Only 3 percent of school librarian respondents stated that they would leave Colorado for the right position, compared with at least 10 percent of respondents from each of the other sectors. The careers of school and special librarians also tended to be more tied to their personal lives, as 7 percent of each of these groups responded that they would leave Colorado if their family relocated. Only 3 percent of academic librarians and 5 percent of public librarians felt this way. Academic librarians were nearly the reverse of school librarians in response to this question. They were far and away the most likely group to say that they expected that they would need to leave Colorado for a better position, with 9 percent of academic librarians believing this compared to no more than 1 percent from any other sector. Respondents from academic libraries were also most likely to state that they planned to leave Colorado, or that they would leave the state for the right position, with nearly one-fourth (23 percent) of respondents claiming one of these positions.

RECRUITMENT

A large percentage of respondents to the survey (37 percent) identified themselves as either students or paraprofessionals, not planning to retire

within five years. For the purposes of the study, these respondents were classified as potential recruits to the profession. Of these, 17 percent were currently pursuing a master's degree in library and information science (LIS) or a school library media endorsement. The rest were nonretiring paraprofessionals, that is, individuals who worked in libraries but did not have a master's degree in LIS or a school library media endorsement. While both of these groups were classified as "recruits" into librarianship, they often held different views about the profession, and were studied separately.

Recruitment: Selected Demographics
Responding LIS students encompassed a wide age range, but the concentration of them (51 percent) were between thirty and forty-four years of age. Another 29 percent were between forty-five and fifty-four years old, which means that four out of five LIS students were between thirty and fifty-four. All told, only about one in six (16 percent) LIS students was under the age of thirty, suggesting that for a majority of students librarianship represents a second career. However, this was still a higher percentage of younger individuals than found in the paraprofessionals group, where only 14 percent were under thirty. Thirteen percent of nonretiring paraprofessionals were fifty-five or older, and the remainder indicated they were forty-five to fifty-four (43 percent) or thirty to forty-four (30 percent).

Correspondingly paraprofessionals had more library work experience with 58 percent having at least six years experience compared to 25 percent of LIS students. In fact, more than one in four (26 percent) LIS students had no library experience.

Of those LIS students working in a library, nearly half (47 percent) worked in a public library, more than one in five (22 percent each) worked in a special or school library, and less than one in ten (9 percent) worked in an academic library. There is a somewhat different distribution of paraprofessionals with far fewer working in school (13 percent) or special (10 percent) libraries and more working academic (11 percent) or public (66 percent) libraries.

Recruiting Paraprofessionals
Future librarians often build experience in the field before pursuing the LIS master's degree. Seventy-four percent of the LIS students were working in libraries at the time of the study—evidence that when recruiting new librarians, perhaps the best place to look is to the paraprofessionals already working in libraries. The insights of these library employees could go a long way in determining what hinders recruitment to the profession, and what might promote it.

In addition to the general questions, paraprofessional respondents were asked whether they were considering the pursuit of a degree in LIS.

Just over one in four (26 percent) responded that they were considering this step. In geographically diverse Colorado, respondents in some locations were more likely to consider pursuing an LIS degree than others. Specifically, paraprofessionals living in the mountain or Western Slope regions of the state were most likely to consider the pursuit of this degree, with 35 percent of such respondents taking it into consideration. Residents of the opposite side of the state—Colorado's Eastern Plains—were least likely to consider pursuing an advanced degree, with only 17 percent saying that they would do this. Not surprisingly, younger paraprofessionals (42 percent) were more likely to pursue an advanced degree in the library field than were older paraprofessionals.

Notably, three-quarters of nonretiring paraprofessional respondents had no interest in pursuing a degree in LIS. These respondents were asked to identify reasons for not pursuing the degree. There were a variety of reasons offered to decline the pursuit of a degree, and indeed the responses varied. Seven different answers were each cited by over one-fourth of the paraprofessional respondents, indicating that deciding whether to pursue an advanced degree represents a complex decision for many. For all paraprofessionals, the two most commonly cited reasons were that the degree was not necessary in current position (52 percent) and they had financial constraints (44 percent).

However, responses to this question were heavily influenced by some demographic characteristics. Twenty-six percent of paraprofessionals in academic libraries cited a lack of support from their employer, three times the rate of those in other sectors. Meanwhile, public library paraprofessionals (32 percent) were nearly twice as likely as others to indicate not pursuing an LIS degree because they were not interested in pursuing further formal education of any kind. Finally, school library paraprofessionals were most likely to decline the pursuit of an LIS degree due to familial obligations, with 39 percent of them pointing to this as a deterrent.

Geography also played an important part in determining which factors might discourage the pursuit of an LIS degree. Specifically, paraprofessionals in nonmetropolitan areas were much more likely than their metropolitan counterparts to cite the inconvenient location of a school, not being interested in online education, and being satisfied with their current positions as reasons not to pursue more schooling.

Paraprofessionals who were considering pursuing an advanced degree were asked to identify factors that would encourage them to seek such a degree. The factors selected most often were potential solutions to many of the barriers expressed by those who chose not to pursue the advanced degree. Numerous paraprofessionals said financial constraints were a discouraging factor to getting the degree, and the factor most often cited in promoting the pursuit of such a degree was the availability of financial aid, with 76 percent of respondents naming this as an encouraging factor.

Class location and flexibility were also viewed as important factors that might encourage one to obtain an LIS degree, with over half of these respondents citing accessibility of online classes, convenient location of classes, and convenient class schedule as factors that encouraged degree-seeking.

Why Librarianship (or Why Not)?

Factors That Make Librarianship an Attractive Profession
All respondents to the survey were asked two questions about their perceptions of the profession. The first asked them which factors made librarianship an attractive career choice, and the second turned it around and asked which factors contributed most to discouraging a career in librarianship. Some strong trends emerged. In particular, three factors were especially appealing to both librarians and paraprofessionals. Both service to others and a love of books or reading were cited as factors attracting them to the profession by more than half of all respondents (53 percent and 51 percent of respondents, respectively). As well, 45 percent of all respondents stated that the intellectual challenge inherent in the work helped draw them to librarianship.

There was a slight, but noticeable, divide between those who chose to make librarianship a career by pursuing a professional degree, and those working in the profession as paraprofessionals. Whereas librarians were much more likely than their paraprofessional colleagues to cite the intellectual challenge (55 versus 36 percent), paraprofessionals were more likely to find work in libraries to be attractive due to a love of books and reading (61 percent) than their MLIS colleagues (42 percent). Students fell somewhere in-between the other groups with love of books or reading (61 percent) the most cited favorable factor, followed by intellectual challenge (46 percent), and service to others (42 percent).

Factors That Discourage a Career in Librarianship
What factors, then, would discourage people from entering the profession? While the positive aspects of the profession tended to center around the intrinsic values of public service and a stimulating workplace, the negative aspects identified by respondents were focused on either pragmatic or perceptual issues. The most cited discouraging factor to pursuing a career in librarianship, by far, was low financial compensation. Sixty-nine percent of all respondents identified this as a discouraging factor to entering the profession. Another major theme that was cited as dissuading entrance to the profession was the sense that librarianship has a perception problem. Forty-eight percent of respondents identified misconceptions about librarianship and 30 percent identified negative stereotypes about the profession as discouraging factors. The fourth and fifth most likely responses to this question returned to more pragmatic issues, as ap-

proximately one out of every four respondents said a lack of advancement opportunities or limited job opportunities were factors that discouraged entrance into the profession.

In other words, people are drawn to the profession primarily based on qualities of librarianship that can be described as providing great intrinsic value, and they are likely to be discouraged from librarianship because of financial and perceptual factors.

Value of an MLIS Degree

In the summer of 2008, spurred by a discussion on a local library list-serv, LRS launched a brief "reader poll" style survey about the value of the MLIS degree. This was obviously a topic that people felt passionately about, as the survey attracted nearly two thousand responses from all over the world. More than one thousand people left comments in an optional, open-ended question about the value of an MLIS degree. LRS research fellows conducted a thorough content analysis of the results, parsing out six major categories that most of the comments fell into, and then classifying the comments as positive or negative within each category (Archuleta, Hovendick, & Lamborne, 2009). Results of this analysis reinforced the 3Rs findings. Of the six categories, the one that garnered an overwhelming portion of positive comments was intrinsic value. Ninety-eight percent of all comments that mentioned the intrinsic value of the profession were positive in nature. Meanwhile, the category that generated the highest proportion of negative comments, with 86 percent of such comments classified as negative, was perception of the profession. As well, more than two-thirds of all comments that were categorized as postdegree finances and job market/demand were classified as negative.

Like any profession, there are aspects of librarianship that are generally viewed as strengths and weaknesses, or positives and negatives, to choosing the profession as a career. In the end, then, what is the final judgment? Is librarianship, as a career choice, worth it? Overwhelmingly, respondents to LRS's brief survey answered "Yes!" Of all librarian respondents, nearly nine out of ten (89 percent) said that the MLIS was personally worth the investment to them, and 86 percent said that they would recommend the degree to others, today. These sentiments were especially strong among librarians who had been in the profession for an extended period of time. Ninety-five percent of librarians who had been in the profession for at least sixteen years felt the degree was personally worth the investment, and 89 percent would recommend it to others.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE?

Supply and Demand of Librarians

What does all of this mean for the future of librarianship as a profession? The main conclusion elicited from the 2003–4 study was that librarian-

ship was on the cusp of major change, brought on by a generational wave of retirements. There was concern expressed that there were not enough people entering the profession to replace the large number of impending retirements. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics corroborated this concern saying in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook,* 2002–03, "Despite expectations of slower-than-average employment growth, the need to replace librarians as they retire will result in numerous additional job openings" (p. 190). As a result, many suggestions were made to use the perceived positive aspects of the profession, as well as correct the negative aspects, in order to recruit new librarians.

The recent LRS survey regarding the value of the degree suggests that many of the positive and negative aspects of the profession remain (Archuleta, et al. 2009). Furthermore, the most recent *Occupational Outlook Handbook,* 2008-09, indicates that the "graying" of the profession is still an issue: "More than two out of three librarians are aged forty-five or older, which will result in many job openings over the next decade as many librarians retire" (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). The next sentence from the *Handbook,* however, details one development that has changed the landscape somewhat: "However, recent increases in enrollments in MLS programs will prepare a sufficient number of new librarians to fill these positions." This influx of a new generation of library students may be mitigating the effects of the baby boomer retirements.

Retirement and Economic Factors
Another factor that might be affecting the turnover of librarian positions, in Colorado at least, is the economy. In late 2003, many communities in Colorado were still suffering from the effects of the economic downturn of 2002 when library funding was cut or, in the case of state aid, eliminated. Curious as to how this would affect the profession, respondents were asked how the economic downturn was influencing their career plans and what changes they observed at their library.

When asked how the downturn in the economy had affected their career plans, almost half of retiring librarians (44 percent) indicated it had not changed their plans. One-fifth said they would retire later (21 percent) and nearly the same number would retire earlier (19 percent). Few in this group indicated they would seek another job or return to school for another degree.

In the spring of 2009, LRS released another short survey into the field, again to gauge the effects of a downward spiraling economy on the people in the profession (Steffen, Lietzau, & Hovendick, 2009). This short survey was much smaller in scope and response rate than the 3Rs study, and thus should be treated as anecdotal evidence more than rigorous research. Still, responses to questions about the impact of the economy on career plans paralleled responses from the 3Rs study. One important dif-

ference, however, was that in 2009 Colorado librarians were much more likely to report that they were planning to retire later, and much less likely to report plans to retire earlier, due to the downturn in the economy. Likely, this reflects the severity of this most recent economic downturn, which has drastically affected many people's financial portfolios.

CONCLUSION

In revisiting the 3Rs study, as well as the recently fielded reader polls, several points seem clear about the future of librarianship.

First, librarianship is in the midst of a generational change. As the librarians of the baby boomer generation retire—and they will eventually retire—there will be a demographic shift in library staff, as younger staff take the place of retirees.

Second, librarianship is a desirable profession for those that value meaningful work that encourages intellectual challenge, a love of reading, and service to others. However, librarianship is frequently misunderstood by those outside of the profession and undervalued, including monetarily.

Third, a follow-up study is needed. Did one in five librarians in Colorado retire between 2004 and 2009? Has the economy really delayed or possibly hastened retirements? Will there be a dearth or excess of librarians in the future? These questions are moving targets in a constantly changing population, economy, and information environment.

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