

## *Introduction*

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ROSEMARY RUHIG DuMONT

WIDESPREAD INTEREST IN THE role of women in librarianship is a product of the 1970s. In the early seventies, both the Supreme Court and Congress took steps to ensure equality of opportunity in the workplace. As a result, affirmative action became an issue of immediate practical concern to decision-makers in organizations. In the sex-stratified female-intensive occupation of librarianship, the problem of differential male/female advancement within the field became a focus of interest.

Though some gains were made by library women during the 1970s, as research presented in this volume shows, the full implication of these gains and possible future developments are not clear. Have the doors of opportunity really been opened to female librarians or are those now being promoted into administrative ranks the tokens, the exceptions proving the rule that such opportunities are not open to the majority of women? In dealing with this question one must look for evidence of progress. Some data from the 1970s is reported here and selected trends in library practice are observed. Though the current situation cannot be clearly described as yet, a variety of interpretations are offered and some explanations are proposed.

Experience in the private sector has shown that commitment by top management and the middle managers who will be dealing with incoming women is essential to successful affirmative action efforts.<sup>1</sup> A commitment to affirmative action in the library field, which is reflected in

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Rosemary Ruhig DuMont is Associate Professor, School of Library and Information Studies, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

an open-minded attitude toward women as library managers, might lead to an administrative hierarchy more tolerant of differences among both male and female librarians.

### **The Evidence**

Once the inferior position of women librarians becomes an issue of concern, two possible explanations are generally proposed. Either library women are, by their nature, less qualified and/or interested in leadership positions, or discrimination is to blame. Katharine Phenix offers support for both explanations. Her bibliographic essay provides a general overview of the variety of materials from the last decade which have focused on the status of women in libraries.

Suzanne Hildenbrand presents historical evidence from the Progressive Era showing that library women have been subjected to discrimination. She offers a new model for looking at the position of women in librarianship and other female-intensive professions, which emphasizes intentional sexual segregation with masculinization at the top. While many will find Hildenbrand's analysis controversial, she raises many important questions about the nature of librarianship as a female-intensive occupation and the ability of ambitious women to advance and make an impact on the field.

Barbara Moran also presents historical evidence from the decade of the 1970s in her effort to assess the impact of the equal opportunity/affirmative action law on academic librarians. She shows that although affirmative action laws do appear to have brought about some changes in the administrative staffing patterns in academic institutions, by 1982 the administrative work force of these libraries still did not reflect the composition of their work force. Her study is a significant contribution, offering support for the conclusion that discriminatory hiring practices are still much in evidence in academic library settings.

Robert Swisher, Rosemary Ruhig DuMont, and Calvin Boyer offer psychological evidence that many women in academic library settings are not motivated to be library managers. Using the Miner Sentence Completion Scale, which has demonstrated the concurrent and predictive validity of the concept of motivation to manage, they find that female academic librarians as well as female library school students who are interested in academic librarianship have low motivation-to-manage scores. Equally as interesting, however, is the finding that male academic librarians and male library school students who are interested in academic librarianship also have low motivation-to-manage scores.

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How low levels of motivation to manage affect vocational choice is not clear. However, it appears that men are being promoted at rates not related to their interest in managing.

### **Models from the Present**

Knowledge about career patterns of women librarians and about factors that influence these career patterns is also needed in an effort to analyze the potential for progress of women into leadership positions in libraries. The studies presented here show that many factors—including biological, psychological, sociological, and economic—influence career patterns.

Betty Jo Irvine examines the family background and personal characteristics of academic library administrators, and suggests that while some demographic characteristics are out of the individual's control, women can make some choices that will have positive impact on their chances for advancement into a managerial career. In particular, she suggests that appropriate educational preparation and publication activities enhance chances for visibility and subsequent career development. She also shows that there appear to be career and family trade-offs that women must make which may not be necessary for their male colleagues.

Joy Greiner studies the career-development patterns of male and female library administrators in large public libraries. She examines personal and family data and finds significant differences between male and female directors in personal and family data which relate to age, marital status, presence of children, education, education of parents, and continuing-education activities. In addition, the data show that there are significant differences between male and female directors in the areas of aspirations for an administrative career, the number and sexes of mentors, the number and reasons for career interruptions, and the number of library employees supervised, among others. Greiner suggests that with viable education credentials, astutely chosen mentors, and active networking, women might have a more equitable opportunity for obtaining management roles.

Barbara Ivy evaluates résumé information prepared by professional librarians and points out that men and women appear to value different kinds of professional activities as reported on résumés. Men, much more than women, tend to emphasize actions in terms of results. Her study shows that for candidates to be considered for positions as library directors, they must demonstrate the ability to develop and use power.

Ivy suggests therefore that women must consciously emphasize results-oriented activities, and show the power gained through such activities by including power-revealing statements on résumés.

Rose Knotts, Traute Danielson, and Stephen Replogle examine personality characteristics of women in nontraditional careers, and compare them to profiles of adult men. Studying women professionals in real estate, management, accounting, and higher education, they find that women in nontraditional careers have psychological needs more like those of men than other women.

A comparison of the profile Knotts et al. develop with that of the librarians profiled suggests a number of propositions about the nature of the library profession and the needs it fulfills for the professionals who work in it. Holland<sup>2</sup> proposes a theoretical model of vocational choice. Holland's theory assumes that, at the time of vocational choice, a person is the product of the interaction of hereditary, cultural, and personal forces. From these forces he or she develops a hierarchy of orientations for dealing with daily environmental needs and demands. These orientations include such variables as interpersonal skills, values, interests, and aptitudes. Associated with these orientations are differences in physical and social environments. The heart of Holland's theory focuses on the process by which a person searches for those environments congruent with his or her hierarchy of coping orientations. It may be that librarianship attracts professionals, both male and female, who fit a different management model than the one developed in a business setting. Perhaps as men move up in the hierarchy they recognize the significance and utility of the business management model and more easily adapt to it than women. Consequently, they are able to progress further up the administrative hierarchy. It may also be that library men are seen to "fit" the business management model, whether they actually do or not, and so are promoted anyway.

### **The Future**

Two final papers point the way ahead. Jill Moriearty and Jane Robbins-Carter indicate that role models might be a particularly significant variable in encouraging library women to make nontraditional career choices. Darlene Weingand suggests that continuing education might provide the opportunity for women librarians to take charge and humanize their technological futures.

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Though no generally accurate evaluations can be made now, it appears that the library profession is in a period of crucial transition in the encouragement and promotion of women into leadership positions. Despite the evidence shown in this volume of some progress made in the 1970s, much of the data provokes continued questioning of the effectiveness of action to advance women into the ranks of top management.

New research efforts are needed to address the issue of discrimination specifically. As has been done in other settings, experiments on sex-role stereotypes affecting women's hiring, promotion, work attitudes, and evaluations by superiors and subordinates needs to be done in the library setting. In addition, the dynamics of the library and its interaction with individual attitudes need to be investigated.

Few attempts have been made to propose solutions to the current stagnation of affirmative action efforts. As emphasis shifts from formal affirmative action efforts to informal solutions to affirmative action problems, knowledge is needed of the informal relationships established in library settings in which the daily transactions and decisions of the library take place. Little is known about the dynamics of informal networks, particularly those that may be established by women, or the male networks in which women are either excluded or included. One would hope that awareness of such power structures would enable women either to combat their exclusion from them or to learn behaviors that would bring about their participation in them. Through such research efforts, a better understanding of women's place in the leadership ranks of the library profession may be forthcoming.

## References

1. Shaeffer, Ruth Gilbert, and Lynton, Edith F. *Corporate Experiences in Improving Women's Job Opportunities*. New York: Conference Board, 1979.
2. Holland, J.L. "A Theory of Vocational Choice." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 6(no. 1, 1959):35-45.

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