

The Job Market For Librarians

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Introduction

INFORMATION ON THE GENERAL JOB market as well as for specific occupations and professions is of interest to a wide variety of persons, such as prospective students, new graduates, career changers, employers, educators, government agency personnel, the media, and others. Many factors affect the labor market. Demographic, economic, social, and technological changes all have an impact on the supply and demand of workers. Job openings usually occur through growth or through replacement needs due to retirements, deaths, transfers from other occupations, or other reasons.

The library labor market is influenced by both external and internal factors. The supply and demand in any profession or occupation often is cyclical in nature and the library field is no exception. As White has pointed out, probably no question has had more discussion among library professionals than that of the supply and demand of library school graduates. The questions asked are: Is there a shortage? Is there going to be a shortage? Is there presently an oversupply? If so, can or should anything be done about it?¹

Historical Overview

While this article will not address the hundred years that formal library education has been in existence, it might be useful to review

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highlights from the last few decades. In the 1960s, there was a so-called manpower crisis in the library profession. Increased federal funding brought an expansion of services and building programs along with the creation of new positions. In addition, there were a number of new library education programs. From 1960 to 1970, the average annual growth rate in librarian positions ranged from 4.1 percent in public libraries to 6.5 percent in academic libraries.²

The supposed shortage of 100,000 librarians, however, turned out to be the personnel that would be needed if all standards were met. There were not 100,000 unfilled positions. The 1970 *Library Journal* summary on placements and salaries of library school graduates reported for the first time in the history of its nineteen-year-old series a marked reduction in the number of openings available for beginning librarians. Carlyle Frarey pointed out that there were still more jobs than people to fill them, but the picture began to alter in 1969 and this change had implications for library school recruitment efforts and practices.³

The economic reversal, reduction of federal funds, and increasing number of library school graduates led to a very competitive job market in the early 1970s. An American Library Association (ALA) survey in 1971 uncovered a number of library budget cuts, hiring freezes, and reductions in hiring.⁴ There were cries that library schools should limit enrollment and that ALA should declare a moratorium on the accreditation of new library education programs. This resulted in a statement in 1976 by the ALA Committee on Accreditation (COA) that said such suggestions were based on a misunderstanding of the functions that accreditation could appropriately serve. COA said it was not a proper function of an accrediting agency to attempt to control entry into a given profession by denying accreditation to programs that met established standards. This action would in effect be a restriction of trade since any institution had a right to apply for accreditation of a program. It also was not a proper function of accreditation to attempt to dictate to institutions on the basis of the current job market in a particular profession the number of students to be admitted to a program. However, the statement declared that prospective and current students should be apprised of the current job market and be given complete information to enable them to make their own decisions about the choice of profession or educational programs.⁵

In an article on "Library Education and Placement Problems," Hickey wrote that the "irony of the library job situation is that there is no shortage of work to be done...but there are, from time to time, shortages of funds with which to support the services." She warned that

The Job Market for Librarians

a later lack of qualified librarians might emerge and that it would be "tragic if good prospects were turned away from library education because today's librarians...had not been able to anticipate economic change."⁶

The 1980s have brought a more even balance between supply and demand as a result of a decline in the number of graduates from master's-degree programs, some economic improvement, and the movement of librarians into other information-related positions. There are even some indications of shortages in certain specialties and a concern that an overall shortage of librarians in the near future will occur.

Trends

The *Library Journal's* annual report of placements and salaries from accredited library education programs is the most useful report for tracking supply and demand over a period of time. The report on 1984 graduates (published in the October 1985 *LJ*) is the thirty-fourth such annual report. Reviewing the subtitles of past articles gives an interesting picture of the placement scene for the last decade. Subtitles for the reports of the graduating classes include "Not Much Change" (1973), "Promise or Illusion?" (1974), "A Difficult Year" (1975), "A Year of Adjustment" (1976), "The Picture Brightens" (1977), "New Directions" (1978), "Wider Horizons" (1979), "Holding the Line" (1980), "Still Holding" (1981), "Slowing Down" (1982), "Catching Up" (1983), "No Surprises" (1984).

The number of graduates reported ranges from 6336 in 1973 to a decline to 3494 in 1983. The 1984 graduates constituted a slight upswing to 3529. One indication of the job market picture can be gleaned from the percentage of graduates that were unemployed for more than six months after graduation. In the 1970s, this ranged from a high of 16 percent in 1977 to a low of 8 percent in 1979. There was a sharp drop beginning in 1980. Since that time, only 2 to 4 percent of the graduates have been unemployed for more than six months after graduation. The percentage of graduates going into nonprofessional jobs is also revealing. In the 1970s, this was anywhere from 6 to 11 percent. Since 1980 it has held at a steady 4 percent. Another interesting figure that has been reported since 1981 is the percentage of graduates who have gone back to their previous work. This generally ranged from 19 to 23 percent. An unknown variable in the placement picture are those graduates who fail to report their whereabouts after graduation. This usually ranges from 25 to 30 percent of the graduates. One wonders if a complete report

might alter the placement statistics. Trends in library placement of graduates by type of library are presented in table 1.⁷

TABLE 1
PERCENTAGE OF PLACEMENTS OF MLS GRADUATES BY TYPE OF LIBRARY

| <i>Year(s)</i> | <i>Public</i> | <i>School</i> | <i>College/ Universities</i> | <i>Other Library Agencies</i> | <i>Total Percentage</i> |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1951-55 | 33.0 | 23.0 | 28.0 | 16.0 | 100 |
| 1961-65 | 30.0 | 20.0 | 33.0 | 17.0 | 100 |
| 1971 | 29.0 | 26.0 | 30.0 | 15.0 | 100 |
| 1976 | 27.1 | 23.2 | 26.5 | 23.2 | 100 |
| 1979 | 27.4 | 17.9 | 25.3 | 29.4 | 100 |
| 1980 | 27.1 | 19.5 | 25.1 | 28.3 | 100 |
| 1981 | 27.3 | 19.2 | 23.6 | 29.9 | 100 |
| 1982 | 28.5 | 17.4 | 24.5 | 29.6 | 100 |
| 1983 | 28.0 | 17.3 | 23.8 | 30.9 | 100 |
| 1984 | 27.9 | 14.4 | 28.0 | 29.7 | 100 |

Source: *Library Journal* 110(1 Oct. 1985):62.

Little other data exist that trace the job market through the years. Rayman studied academic position vacancies in *Library Journal* from 1970 to 1979. It was a decade of fluctuating levels with job opportunities falling to critically low levels at the decade's end.⁸ Morris charted the number of help-wanted ads in *American Libraries* and *Library Journal* from 1961 through 1980 and compared this with the number of MLS degrees granted from accredited and nonaccredited programs. The number of degrees rose steadily from 1931 in 1961 to 8091 in 1979 but started declining after that date to 5374 in 1980. The number of help-wanted ads increased along with the degrees until 1967 when the number of ads began to fall, but the numbers of degrees continued to climb until 1979.⁹

Although the ALA placement center represents only one part of the job market, the annual conference placement center statistics show a similar rise and fall of library jobs by comparing the ratio of library job listings with job seeker registrations each year. One can see the shortage of librarians relative to position vacancies in the 1960s followed by an increase in the number of job seekers compared to the job openings in the 1970s. The 1980s have showed a narrowing of the gap as the number

The Job Market for Librarians

of job seekers has come closer to the number of positions available. In 1984, for the first time in many years, there were more jobs than job seekers (see table 2).¹⁰

TABLE 2
NUMBERS OF APPLICANTS AND JOB OPENINGS
AT ALA ANNUAL CONFERENCES PLACEMENT CENTER, 1965-1985

| <i>Annual Conference</i> | <i>Applicants</i> | <i>Job Openings</i> | <i>Applicants/ Openings</i> |
|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1965 (Detroit) | 203 | 909 | 0.22 |
| 1966 (New York) | 632 | 1603 | 0.39 |
| 1969 (Atlantic City) | 629 | 1352 | 0.46 |
| 1970 (Detroit) | 923 | 892 | 1.03 |
| 1971 (Dallas) | 1133 | 521 | 2.17 |
| 1972 (Chicago) | 1416 | 572 | 2.48 |
| 1973 (Las Vegas) | 1193 | 525 | 2.27 |
| 1974 (New York) | 1899 | 401 | 4.74 |
| 1975 (San Francisco) | 1569 | 521 | 3.01 |
| 1976 (Chicago) | 1995 | 530 | 3.76 |
| 1977 (Detroit) | 1515 | 455 | 3.33 |
| 1978 (Chicago) | 1373 | 507 | 2.71 |
| 1979 (Dallas) | 745 | 554 | 1.34 |
| 1980 (New York) | 1184 | 586 | 2.02 |
| 1981 (San Francisco) | 840 | 600 | 1.40 |
| 1982 (Philadelphia) | 1077 | 557 | 2.12 |
| 1983 (Los Angeles) | 715 | 509 | 1.40 |
| 1984 (Dallas) | 699 | 857 | 0.82 |
| 1985 (Chicago) | 940 | 834 | 1.13 |

Source: ALA Office for Library Personnel Resources. *Placement Center Reports*.

Note: Data for 1967 and 1968 not available.

Current Job Market

When asked about the job market for librarians, many people will answer "It depends." In essence, there is not just one market but many—depending on the type of library, geographical interests, or other interests of a person. Altman claimed there are at least three markets for librarians. The "major" library market is easy to track nationally because of advertisements in the national journals for positions in large academic and public libraries and some school and special libraries.

Filling these positions tend to be the MLS graduates, mostly from accredited programs. In 1981-82, the *Library Compensation Review* found 2500 positions advertised in major libraries. (Note: Unfortunately, this *Review* ceased publication in 1983 but for a two-year period offered interesting analyses of position vacancies.) Another market, according to Altman, is the "smaller" library market which is more difficult to survey because these positions are advertised only in local and diffuse sources, if at all. This market includes many of the small-town public libraries; some school libraries; and small, special libraries where the professionals come from a variety of backgrounds and where the MLS is often not required or expected. The third market, "information professionals," is emerging in a variety of settings—mostly profit-making organizations—and is difficult to track because the job titles are diverse and unstandardized.¹¹

The King Research study on *Library Human Resources* published in 1983 replaced the 1975 Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) report as the most comprehensive study of supply and demand for the library profession. The BLS study had reported 115,000 librarians employed in 1970 with 45 percent in schools, 23 percent in public libraries, 17 percent in academic libraries, and 15 percent in special libraries. BLS had projected 168,000 librarians employed by 1985.¹² In 1982, BLS reported employment of 151,000 librarians.¹³ This is slightly higher than the King Research survey data of the same year which reported that 139,000 librarians were employed in 1982 with 48 percent in school libraries, 23 percent in public libraries, 15 percent in academic libraries, and 14 percent in special libraries.

The King Research team found that approximately 23,000 librarians were hired and 17,000 left their jobs in 1981. These figures represent people who both entered the profession, left the field, or moved from one job to another within it. Of those hired, 34 percent were new graduates, 44 percent were transfers from other libraries, and 22 percent came from other types of employment or were previously unemployed. Six percent had been nonprofessionals in the same library. Of the librarians leaving their jobs in 1981, 15 percent left libraries for other employment; and 49 percent retired, died, returned to school, became unemployed, or left the workforce for other reasons. The King Research report found that 13,000 librarians would be needed each year to replace those that left library institutions.

In reviewing the supply side, King reported that in 1981, 5000 MLS degrees (accredited and nonaccredited), 300 bachelor's in library science and 1700 school library certificates were awarded. The 1981 MLS graduates were distributed almost equally across types of libraries, but the

The Job Market for Librarians

majority of school library certificate and bachelor's degree holders went to work in school libraries. Over half the recent graduates hired by school libraries were from other than MLS programs.¹⁴ Heim has analyzed the school library media workforce and in it also discusses the decline of school library placements from accredited programs.¹⁵

Additional information about the job market for persons coming from the undergraduate library science programs is found in a survey by Schmidt, who solicited information on 1980 graduates of these programs. A total number of 791 graduates were reported from 130 programs, the majority of whom indicated the degree was a library science minor (82.3 percent). The minor degrees tended to be awarded in tandem with teaching diplomas as part of a general curriculum in education or media. Of the 682 placements reported, 550 (81 percent) were in professional positions and the remainder in paraprofessional jobs. Sixty percent of the professional positions and 32 percent of the paraprofessional jobs filled by the graduates were in school-library media centers. The remainder were spread across other types of libraries.¹⁶

Movement by librarians from jobs in one type of library to another does not appear to be as prevalent as in the 1960s during the shortage of librarians. As the market became more competitive, employers found they could get very specific kinds of expertise and experience. Unfortunately, some may have escalated qualification requirements without reviewing if these were truly job-related. The King Research report warns that if employers and librarians perceive that librarian skills are not transferable across library types and librarians cannot move easily from one type of library to another, imbalances within the profession may occur. The survey found that of librarians changing jobs in 1981, 27 percent moved from one type of library to another while 73 percent went to another job in the same type of library.¹⁷

Koenig and Safford point to the vertical stratification in the library field, particularly in academic librarianship, where it becomes difficult to move up to a senior position in a large academic library without having been in a large academic library environment early in one's career. They make the case for horizontal mobility and indicate academic research libraries are being crippled by early delimiting of the field from which they recruit managerial personnel. Koenig and Safford advocate that academic research libraries consider hiring managerial-level personnel from outside the academic-research library ranks, with demonstrated managerial competence in other areas such as industrial research or large public libraries.¹⁸

Geographical Data

The King Research report included minimal information on the employment situation by geographical area. From 1978 to 1982 employment increased in each region but only very slightly in the Great Lakes. Average annual increases for the North Atlantic and Southeast regions were just under 2 percent during this time period, while the West and Southwest's employment of librarians grew at a rate equivalent to 4 percent per year.¹⁹

The author contacted library telephone joblines within the various states asking for statistics on the number of job openings but many do not collect this data. The ALA Association of College and Research Libraries jobline announced 117 openings in the first eight months of 1985. In 1984, ACRL listed 120 jobs. The Pacific Northwest Library Association (PNLA) listed 335 jobs in a one-year period from July 1984 to June 1985. This represented a 15 percent increase in job listings over the 287 recorded in 1983-84. The majority of these were from the state of Washington. From 1978 to 1982, the PNLA jobline averaged between 100 and 200 jobs a year. The Oregon/Library Media Jobline announced 107 openings in 1984 and 113 in 1985 (through August). The British Columbia Library Association jobline reported 110 openings during 1984-85 and 178 during 1983-84.

In Illinois, 243 jobs were listed during 1984-85 with 40 percent in public libraries, 39 percent in special libraries, 18 percent in academic, 1 percent in school, and 2 percent in other. The number of calls was up 36.5 percent over 1983-84. Oklahoma's jobline reported twelve to fifteen jobs each week, mostly in public and academic libraries. The Texas State Library jobline reported a total of 1846 listings in 1981-82, 697 in 1982-83, 732 in 1983-84, and 796 in 1984-85. Of the total 4051 jobs during this four year period, 2088 were in public libraries, 1448 in academic, 397 in special, and 118 in school libraries. The Texas Library Association Job Hotline listed ninety-three openings from January through August 1985, with approximately twelve new positions each month. The Pennsylvania Job Hotline announced 284 jobs from January through August 1985. The New England jobline does not keep statistics, but Matarazzo estimated that approximately 10 percent of the New England jobs posted at the Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science are listed on the jobline. The number of New England postings at Simmons climbed steadily from 440 openings in 1981 to 762 in 1984.²⁰

A survey, done by Ashford, of New England positions during 1980-83 uncovered 2040 position vacancies. In 1981 there was an 18.5

The Job Market for Librarians

percent drop because of the recession and property rollback efforts in Massachusetts but in 1983 there was a 13.4 percent increase over 1982 openings.²¹

In a 1985 survey of sixty university teacher-placement officials, library science was listed as a teaching field with a slight teacher shortage, particularly in Alaska, Hawaii, South Central states, Great Plains/Midwest states and Southeast states.²²

Type of Function

Ashford's study and the Simmons data showed a consistently high number of openings in cataloging, children's services, information and reference, school media, and technical services. The *Library Journal* placements and salaries articles for the last several years have been reporting a shortage of persons in children's librarianship and technical services and persons with science, language, business, and engineering backgrounds. At its 1985 Midwinter meeting, the ALA Resources and Technical Services Division's Heads of Cataloging Departments Discussion Group explored the reasons for the lack of applicants for entry-level cataloging positions. In addition to the declining enrollments (which affect all types of jobs) the cataloging administrators surmised that the prestige of the professional cataloger has suffered due to the redefinition of traditional librarian tasks as a result of automation and the blurring of distinctions between the original, independent, intellectual tasks of the professional and those that have been taken over by the paraprofessionals. There is also concern that library schools may be conveying the impression that cataloging is an undesirable occupation and a career dead end, rather than an intellectually challenging aspect of librarianship.²³

Fitzgibbons reviewed advertisements for children and young adult librarian positions in *American Libraries* for 1982 and the first half of 1983. She found a total of fifty-eight positions advertised during this time period; thirty-four required some experience although no positions required more than five year's experience. Children's librarians were most sought after in the midwest, south, and southwest.²⁴ A number of articles in the literature have pointed to the difficulties in recruiting children's librarians and there has been pressure on library schools to not drop courses in this area. The lack of career ladders and low salaries have been cited as difficulties in attracting people to this area of specialization.²⁵

The shortages of applicants described earlier have also been reflected in the ALA conference placement centers in the last few years.

The numbers of job openings in the technical services and youth services areas have been greater than the number of applicants interested in these types of positions.

Altman has discussed how librarians have not been especially "clairvoyant prognosticators." Many had predicted that cooperative cataloging systems would reduce the need for in-house catalogers but this does not appear to have happened. In 1981, the *Library Compensation Review* reported that 14 percent of all advertised position openings were for catalogers. These were evidently not necessarily for persons to deal with foreign-language materials uncataloged by the major utilities because only 40 percent of the position vacancies listed a requirement for reading knowledge of another language. Only reference and general administration positions had more openings than cataloging. These three types accounted for 60 percent of all advertised openings in 1981. Of the reference positions, 60 percent were for persons with special subject competence. Altman also indicated the literature of the 1970s had predicted an increase in audiovisual, bibliographic instruction, personnel, and systems specialists. However, in 1982 these constituted only 1 to 2 percent of the jobs.²⁶

Outside Libraries

The job market for librarians in the broader information-related field outside the traditional library setting has attracted a great deal of interest in the last several years. Some data are beginning to emerge, although the field is still fluid. Until 1980, placements in other information specialties were lumped with special libraries in the annual *Library Journal* report on MLS graduates. Of the 2035 known placements for the 1984 graduates, 89 were reported in "other information specialties."²⁷ The report indicated that employers in information-related organizations are beginning to look to library schools for people to fill nontraditional positions.

The King Research report found that approximately 4 percent of the graduates were finding information jobs outside libraries, although 9 percent of the librarians changing jobs in 1981 transferred to non-library information positions.²⁸

Sellen and Vaughn report on questionnaire responses from 487 librarians who have moved into alternative work places. Of the respondents, 80 percent listed their primary source of income from business, government, or other organizations. Fifty-four owned their own businesses and forty-three were self-employed free-lance workers. Over 60 percent worked for the private, for-profit sector. A wide variety of job

The Job Market for Librarians

titles was given. The most prevalent titles included director; president; owner; sales, marketing or program director; librarian; executive director; deputy director; and information specialist. Respondents were asked to describe their principal area of work. The highest number checked administrative/management (30 percent), followed by consultant (22 percent), researcher (19 percent), marketing/promotion (18 percent), editor (17 percent), information manager and writer (17 percent), customer service (15 percent), indexer (11 percent), teacher/trainer (11 percent), systems analyst (10 percent), and information broker (10 percent).

Because these jobs are not found in the traditional library-placement sources, it is necessary to look to other methods. Sellen and Vaughn reported that 42 percent in their survey acquired their present jobs through personal contacts and 20 percent created the position themselves. Published sources, library school placement services, and employment agencies contributed less than 10 percent of the job announcements. Only 31 percent were advised of such career opportunities in library school. Seventy-one percent would advise people to get a library degree to obtain similar types of jobs, although 29 percent would not. Most often mentioned as a different subject degree that would be helpful were the MBA and training in computer science. Other course work that would help included management, public administration, communication, education, and journalism. The majority of responses showed that a library science degree was of value to them, whether or not they recommended it for others.²⁹

The information marketplace still is in the process of being defined. Slater comments that the librarian/information worker functions have various shadings and gradations and exist on a continuum with fluid boundaries.³⁰ Summit and Meadow assert that employment in the information industry is difficult to measure since the industry itself is not easy to define. They conclude that the computer/communications aspect of librarianship is growing faster than the traditional service side.³¹ In particular, the boundaries between special librarianship and the other information-related positions need clearer definition. Koenig and Kochoff outlined the emerging roles for librarians in data administration and think that special librarians in particular are in a good position of knowing the business organization and would be able to move into these positions. The image of librarians, however, is a stumbling block. Librarians must sell their expertise to senior data administrators and stake out their territory. It is necessary to move swiftly to get into this area.³²

The *Online* series of articles on career opportunities in the online industry should be especially helpful to those who are seeking the nontraditional information positions. Often these are advertised in data processing sources but are difficult to find because of continually changing job titles and the creation of new functions. There is a need for market-research, quality-control, and project-management personnel and technical writers. Opportunities exist for database publishers, vendors, computer manufacturers, records managers, and many other types of positions in such high-tech fields as microcomputing, video-discs, teletext, and videotext.³³

Strauch points to the need for marketing professionals who understand both marketing practice and the nature of information. Also needed are computer professionals and specialists in ergonomics. She lists a wide variety of sample job titles likely to be found in an information retailing firm, such as online search specialist, document delivery manager, researcher, systems designer, order fulfillment manager, abstractor/indexer, records manager, and others.³⁴

Chen's study of information professional positions found that library school graduates are not properly recognized as being capable of carrying out these tasks or being viable candidates for position openings. The majority of information jobs identified in her study called for only a BA or BS degree. If the library profession wants to move from the narrow definition of its profession and become visible in the information environment, Chen recommends carefully evaluating the current situation, developing strategies, and making a public relations campaign. Chen's study estimated that 68 percent of the national workforce is in information-related positions.³⁵

Debon's study estimated that there are 1.64 million information professionals, the majority of which are found in industry (71 percent). State and local governments account for 22 percent of information professionals, with 7 percent in the federal government and 2 percent employed in colleges and universities. The computer field accounts for the largest segment of information workers (42 percent), while librarians and management support personnel comprise the next largest categories with 10 percent each. Some 1500 different job titles are used by these information workers.³⁶ It is difficult to know how easily librarians could move into the other information areas, as many positions call for specific subject knowledge beyond information skills.

In speaking about the invisible information marketplace, Cronin suggests that subject degrees or commercial experience might be more highly regarded by employers than a specifically information orienta-

The Job Market for Librarians

tion. Because it is a "sprawling, fragmented and dynamic environment," the information industry calls for multidisciplinary skills and technical expertise, personal motivation and management capability. These might be more desirable than a professional qualification in library or information science.³⁷

Future Outlook

Although the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) regularly forecasts labor market trends, it admits that developing projections is not a precise statistical process despite the use of economic models. There are too many factors that can alter economic activity. Nevertheless, there are a variety of factors that can be analyzed to look at the supply and demand in the future in general and in the library field specifically. The number and kinds of jobs needed in tomorrow's economy will depend on the interplay of demographic, economic, social, and technological factors. Generally, a growth in the economy is predicted, particularly in the high-tech industries. BLS predicts the large growth areas will be in the fields of health, engineering, and computer sciences.

There has been considerable discussion in the personnel literature about the implications of the aging population in the United States and its impact on the future workforce. Over the next twenty years, the growth of middle-aged to older workers probably is the most important in terms of labor market influences. As the "baby boom" generation gets older, there will be a large increase in the number and proportion of older persons in the workforce. Currently the 18 to 34 age group comprises 48 percent of the workforce but this will decline to 37 percent in the year 2000. The 35 to 54 age group will go from 35 to 49 percent. Women's participation in the workforce will continue to increase, and three-fifths of women are expected to be in the workforce by 2000.³⁸ Early retirements may continue but the extension of work-life opportunities may become a national policy goal. Many industries are encouraging early retirement through lucrative benefits, but some workers are choosing to remain working, although sometimes in more flexible, part-time, or temporary positions after formal retirement.

The National Planning Association predicts that the five Sunbelt states of California, Florida, Texas, Arizona, and North Carolina will account for more than half of the national population in the year 2000. Up to now, the nation's population gains have been in the South and West, although the predicted population declines in the northeast and Midwest have not materialized.³⁹ The West will continue to be the fastest growing region, increasing about 45 percent between 1980 and 2000,

and the South will grow about 31 percent. Geographic shifts usually increase the demand for services but could also increase competition for jobs.⁴⁰

A teacher shortage has been predicted, which may have an impact on school librarians. Experts predict the impending shortage may be the most severe the nation has experienced. Several demographic trends account for this, namely, a decline in the number of college students majoring in education, an expansion of the precollegiate age group, and the fact that 30 to 40 percent of the current teaching force will retire in the next five years. Recent enrollment surges in the Sunbelt states (particularly California, Florida and Texas) may create more need for school librarians as well as teachers. Another problem area for educators is that rural and inner-city school districts are experiencing difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers. Some school systems are hiring provisionally certified teachers or are hiring teachers with no teacher training on an emergency basis.⁴¹

As for librarians, BLS has projected a slower than average change in librarian employment from 1982 to 1995. Using low-, moderate-, and high-trend projections of employment, BLS estimated that by 1995 librarian employment would be 167,000; 170,000; or 174,000. This represents an estimated change anywhere from 10.7 to 15.3 percent. The annual replacement rate is estimated at 13.9 percent.⁴²

In an effort to obtain more specific data by geographical area, the author wrote to the state departments of labor for projections of librarian employment. While not all states responded and data were not always comparable, the summary data in table 3 are of interest. The projected average number of annual openings shows that openings will occur because of replacement needs (due to retirements, deaths, and people leaving the field for other reasons) rather than from growth in the numbers of positions.

The King Research study stated that the number of librarians employed was found to be primarily a function of the population served. Therefore, the number of librarians employed in public libraries is closely tied to the total population, and school and academic librarian employment is closely tied to school enrollments. A 1 percent per year increase is predicted in public librarian employment, a 1 percent per year decline in public school employment, and a slight but steady decline in academic librarian employment. According to the King report, special librarian employment is expected to increase by 4 percent after 1983. Their forecast predicts a slight excess in supply of new graduates over demand but this will not be as great as in the late 1970s.⁴³

The Job Market for Librarians

TABLE 3
LIBRARIAN EMPLOYMENT FOR SELECTED STATES

| <i>State</i> | <i>Estimated</i> | <i>Projected</i> | <i>Estimated Average Number of Annual Openings</i> | | <i>Total</i> |
|----------------|---|--------------------------|--|---------------------------|--------------|
| | <i>Number of Employed Librarians (Year)</i> | <i>Employment (Year)</i> | <i>Due to Growth</i> | <i>Due to Replacement</i> | |
| Alabama | 2560 ('82) | 2770 ('95) | 15 | 95 | 110 |
| Alaska | 303 ('84) | 347 ('89) | 9 | 11 | 20 |
| Arkansas | 2255 ('82) | 2535 ('95) | | | 130 |
| Florida | | | | | 434 |
| Georgia | 3578 ('80) | 3803 ('90) | 28 | 154 | 182 |
| Hawaii | 424 ('80) | 483 ('90) | | | |
| Illinois | 7186 ('80) | 7337 ('90) | 15 | 325 | 340 |
| Kansas | 1610 ('82) | 1890 ('90) | 40 | 90 | 130 |
| Maine | 589 ('80) | 617 ('90) | 3 | 26 | 29 |
| Maryland | 3670 ('80) | 4129 ('90) | | | |
| Michigan | | | | | 180 |
| Missouri | 2409 ('82) | 2316 ('90) | | | 96 |
| Nebraska | 1086 ('83) | 1124 ('88) | 8 | 54 | 62 |
| New Hampshire | 745 ('81) | 913 ('91) | 17 | 47 | 64 |
| New York | 1812 ('80) | 1852 ('90) | 4 | 188 | 192 |
| North Dakota | 512 ('82) | 518 ('90) | 1 | 22 | 23 |
| Pennsylvania | 7888 ('80) | 7938 ('90) | | | 330 |
| South Carolina | 1870 ('80) | 1980 ('90) | 10 | 90 | 100 |
| Utah | 910 ('84) | 1040 ('89) | 30 | 40 | 70 |
| Virginia | 4533 ('80) | 5461 ('90) | 93 | 217 | 310 |

Source: Data from occupational outlook reports issued by state departments of labor or employment service.

Cooper and Van House expanded on the data from the King Research report with further analyses. Cooper used mathematical models to develop projections and background data on past trends affecting librarian employment. Public librarian employment was viewed in relationship to personal income, property tax revenue, and adult and school-age populations. School librarian employment is affected by school expenditures, number of teachers, and enrollment. Academic library employment variables include total enrollment in higher education, expenditures on higher education, and the number of teachers in colleges and universities. Employment in special libraries is more closely tied to the general health of the economy than to other types of

libraries and varies depending on conditions in particular industries. Cooper thinks that research and development expenditures and employment levels are an important variable in the changes related to special librarian employment. Since the health services industry is a major employer of health science librarians, national health expenditures are also important to track.

During the eight-year projection period used by Cooper (1983-1990), the primary source of new jobs is through replacement demand rather than expansion. Replacement rates were found to average 6.8 percent annually for all libraries. The highest expansion percentage projected is in the special librarian category (27 percent).⁴⁴

Van House used an economic model to forecast the number of accredited MLS graduates and their starting salaries. Variables include library expenditures, professional women's salaries, and past graduates. Because an increase in graduates can cause a decrease in salaries and, in turn, a decrease in graduates, the market will experience alternating periods of surplus and shortage if this relationship is strong. Van House predicts a slight increase in graduates from accredited library education programs and continued competition for the jobs available. Because the library labor market has undergone prolonged disequilibrium for the last three decades, Van House calls for more research into the dynamics of the library labor market and the causes for the shortages and surpluses to forestall and correct for future imbalances in supply and demand.⁴⁵

Related Issues

Although it is difficult to accurately predict the librarian job market in the future, it becomes even more difficult to predict what will happen with the broader information-related field. The place of libraries and librarians in the future "information world" remains uncertain. Debates in the library literature have focused on whether the librarian's role will be enhanced with the increased visibility and accountability of such duties as online searching or whether the librarian's intermediary role will be removed as more users perform their own searches. Some predict the librarian's role will be enhanced to the extent that the librarian can get out of the library and become part of a research team.⁴⁶

Cronin states that structural and technological changes will force the library profession to reassess its position in the information marketplace. Although librarians feel they have a key part to play, they will face commercial competition from a variety of groups. The general public is becoming more computer literate and information self-reliant while at the same time the information function has become more

The Job Market for Librarians

specialized and complex. This has opened up career opportunities for technical specialists from other disciplines and has not necessarily strengthened the librarian's role. In fact, Cronin writes that the "maturation of the information industry has effectively 'exploded' a professional domain and devolved control from society's institutionalized information retailers (i.e., librarians) to a much wider population of technocrats."⁴⁷

Slater raises the possibility that artificial intelligence (AI) can be applied to the intellectual activities of librarians and information workers and thus have ramifications for personnel planning and forecasting. If it is found that much or most of the intellectual work is susceptible to applied AI, then workers might be displaced not only from the more traditional jobs but from alternative ones as well.⁴⁸

The extent to which librarians will move into the broader information arena in the future is an unknown. Also unknown is the extent to which graduate library schools will offer more undergraduate information-related studies or other types of graduate information science/management degrees. If the movement outside libraries is seen as one toward more challenging, exciting, or flexible positions and better salaries, then libraries may face serious competition for new graduates and practitioners who are interested in changing jobs. The shortages mentioned previously may increase.

There are a number of challenges for researchers who might want to explore aspects of the employment picture in greater depth. The King Research report points to areas for which they only had tentative data and could benefit from further insight. For example, there is little data on transfers from other occupations and reentrants. It is difficult to estimate how many former librarians might reenter the library workforce, especially if the market improves. In a survey of reentry women librarians, the ALA Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship found that approximately 17 percent of the sample were persons who had left the profession for a period of two to twenty years and then attempted to reenter. Two-thirds were successful in finding reemployment. Many would have not left the field or would have come back sooner if part-time work had been available.⁴⁹

An area needing more data is replacement demand and the rate at which people leave the library labor force. This often depends in part on their age and sex. Little is known about the average age of librarians. The 1975 BLS study indicated librarians had a higher percentage of older workers than in most other professional occupations.⁵⁰

An area for exploration is the relationship between professional and nonprofessional staff and the effect this has on employment pat-

terns. The King Research report found little change in the relative numbers of librarians and nonprofessionals employed over the five years of the survey. There are, however, some indications that automation in libraries has resulted in fewer professionals and more paraprofessionals; but more research is needed on shifting patterns of professional/support staff responsibilities.⁵¹

The King Research study also did not look in depth at distinctions in employment between different functional areas within librarianship and geographical mobility patterns. A number of studies have identified competencies needed for librarians in different types of libraries and positions,⁵² but more needs to be done in identifying how these competencies relate to different career paths and which ones are transferable to other areas, including the broader information-related positions.

A survey on career development needs of a sampling of ALA members pointed to additional issues for the profession to address. The major barriers to career development identified by the respondents were lack of available jobs and relocation concerns. Those groups more frequently troubled by career concerns and obstacles were entry-level persons, those with three to ten years of experience, nonmanagement people, and public and school librarians. While 51 percent of the sample felt they would achieve their desired career goals, 41 percent felt they would not; and 8 percent said they would leave librarianship. A substantial number of librarians probably will need to seek satisfaction in their current positions because of limited opportunities for advancement. This means that senior managers may need to find new ways to motivate staff who do not have access to traditional rewards such as promotion. Developmental opportunities through such avenues as job exchange, job rotation, job enrichment, team building, and quality control circles should be considered.⁵³

The various job market issues discussed previously relate closely to recruitment issues that must be faced by library education and the profession-at-large. Are we getting the "brightest and the best?" Or are they not coming into librarianship because they have heard it is a competitive market, because the salaries are low in relation to other professions and occupations, because persons who traditionally have come into predominately female professions now have many more options, or some other factors?

In addition to a shortage of persons in areas such as children's librarianship, technical services, or in science and business librarianship, there is a real need to address the problem of minority recruitment. Minority representation in professional library positions is far below minority representation in the population at large. Minority librarians

The Job Market for Librarians

in the four major minority groups in the United States—(1) black; (2) Hispanic; (3) Asian and Pacific Islander; and (4) American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut—consist of slightly over 10 percent of the librarian workforce. These minority groups, however, make up one-fifth of the nation's population and by 2000 these minorities are projected as 29 percent. In 1982-83 only 5.7 percent of all master's-degree graduates were minorities; in fall 1984, 9 percent of the students enrolled in library education master's programs were minorities. The competition of other more rewarding occupations (in terms of status and salaries) is perceived by some to present difficulties in recruiting minority group members to librarianship.⁵⁴

There also needs to be more effort by the profession to make visible the librarian's role in providing quality library service. In particular, it is necessary to increase efforts to educate officials who have control over librarian classifications and salaries on the duties, responsibilities, and qualifications of librarians. The recent challenges to use of the MLS as a hiring requirement and the continued low salaries point to others' lack of understanding of the complexities of professional library work. Pay equity initiatives—which compare librarian salaries with other professions and occupations with comparable skills, effort, responsibilities, and working conditions—are on the increase. These represent one positive approach to improving the status of librarians. Other public awareness and legislative efforts to promote library services should have a ripple effect in increasing the visibility of the librarian but perhaps a greater effort needs to be made to link promotion of library services and promotion of the librarian's role.

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MARGARET MYERS

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