

# ARL

A BIMONTHLY REPORT ON RESEARCH LIBRARY ISSUES AND ACTIONS FROM ARL, CNI, AND SPARC

## THE ARL YOUTH MOVEMENT: RESHAPING THE ARL WORKFORCE

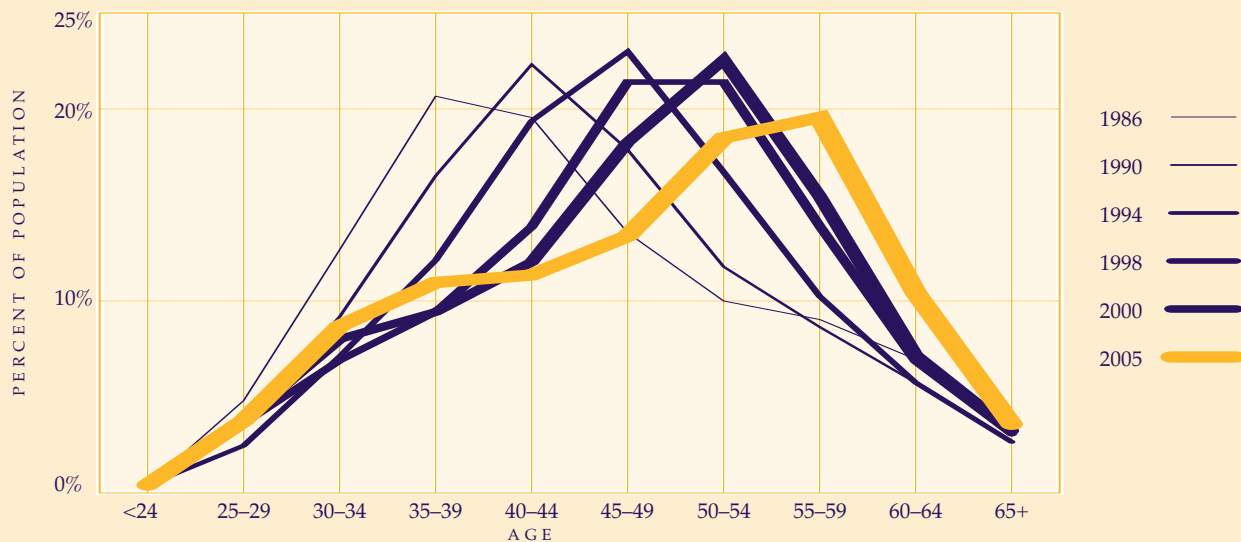
by Stanley J. Wilder, Associate Dean, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester

ARL's most recent demographic data describing the population of professionals working in US university member libraries tell a story already familiar to many: as in every year since ARL began collecting this data series in 1986, the 2005 data reflect an unusually old population that is aging quickly. In that 20-year period, the apex cohort (the age group with the highest percent of the population) has marched steadily across the age curve at nearly the rate that individuals age: from the 35–39 cohort in 1986 to the 55–60 cohort in 2005. By 2005, nearly half of the population was age 50 and over, and one third were 55 and over. The high concentration of individuals

in the upper age cohorts suggests that the ARL population has already begun its period of high retirements, which will peak in 2010–15, producing more retirements than in any five-year period in memory.

How disruptive are these retirements likely to be? There is no question that staff take incalculable expertise with them when they retire, and previous analyses have documented that retirements have had a disparate impact on functional areas such as cataloging.<sup>1</sup> More recently, the data document the emergence of “feral professionals,”<sup>2</sup> who are changing long-standing patterns relating to prestige, compensation, and professional values.<sup>3</sup> Further,

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF PROFESSIONALS IN CANADIAN & US  
ARL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, 1986–2005



# CURRENT ISSUES

Continued

the ARL population does not exist in isolation: data from the Current Population Survey indicate that the US population of librarians mirrors that of ARL, meaning that ARL retirements will occur in a context of high retirements throughout the profession.

## The Case of Canada's Nascent Youth Movement

The case of Canadian ARL library professionals suggests, however, that the transition to a younger population may occur in a smooth, orderly way that involves no profession-wide shortages or other crises. The transition may, on the contrary, prompt a youth movement that could afford ARL libraries the opportunity to retool in ways that might otherwise have been impossible.

Previous studies have noted that the Canadian ARL population has been conspicuously old, even by ARL standards.<sup>4</sup> In retrospect, it may have been more accurate to say that the Canadian ARL population was merely five years ahead of the US population. As recently as 2000, for example, 56% of the Canadian ARL population was 50 and over, compared to 47% of the US ARL population. In five short years, however, the situation has been reversed: the 2005 data show that 30% of Canadian ARL librarians are age 55 and over, compared to 33% of US ARL librarians. Meanwhile, the portion of the Canadian ARL population under 35 nearly doubled between 2000 and 2005, while that of US ARL libraries held steady. In sum, while the US ARL population continued to age between 2000 and 2005, a nascent youth movement made the Canadian ARL population significantly younger.

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It is conceivable that the percentage of young professionals could increase even without new hires by virtue of attrition, but, thus far, Canadian administrators do appear to be refilling positions vacated due to retirement. The number of Canadian ARL professionals has been increasing since 1998, adding 200 individuals between 2000 and 2005 alone. Further, the portion of the population representing "new hires" and "new professionals"<sup>5</sup> doubled along

with the under-35 population between 2000 and 2005, in both cases outstripping the comparable US population for the first time in this 20-year data series. Clearly, new hires and new professionals account

for much of Canada's current youth movement. If we consider that the age of Canada's ARL population remained relatively old in 2005 despite its youth movement, it appears likely that the Canadian hiring boom will continue for the foreseeable future, further swelling the ranks of young professionals.

Canadian ARL libraries account for only 10% of the ARL population, and their youth movement has yet to reach its height. It is worth noting, however, that there have been no published or Web-based comments relating to systematic labor supply shortages, expertise gaps, or any other serious disruption. Will

TABLE 1. PROFESSIONAL POPULATION UNDER 35 IN CANADIAN AND US ARL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, 1986–2005

	Canada	US	Total
1986	12.5%	17.8%	17.4%
1990	8.8%	13.5%	13.1%
1994	6.8%	10.5%	10.2%
1998	4.7%	11.1%	10.6%
2000	6.7%	12.6%	12.1%
2005	12.7%	12.7%	12.7%

TABLE 2. PROFESSIONAL POPULATION UNDER 35 IN US ARL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, 1986–2020

	Actual Percent under 35	Total US ARL University Population	Imputed Number under 35
1986	17.8%	6,886	1,226
1990	13.5%	7,543	1,018
1994	10.5%	7,401	777
1998	11.1%	7,671	851
2000	12.6%	8,127	1,024
2005	12.7%	8,700	1,105
2010*	16.7%	8,406	1,405
2015*	17.4%	8,559	1,492
2020*	17.4%	8,871	1,542

\*Projection using 2000 data (see Stanley J. Wilder, *Demographic Change in Academic Librarianship* (Washington DC: ARL, 2003), 66, Table 24).

TABLE 3. NEW HIRES AND NEW PROFESSIONALS IN CANADIAN AND US ARL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, 1986–2005

	Total Professional Population		New Hires				New Professionals			
	Canada	US	Canada		US		Canada		US	
			Actual Percent	Imputed Number*	Actual Percent	Imputed Number*	Actual Percent	Imputed Number*	Actual Percent	Imputed Number*
1986	831	6,886	3%	28	12%	834	2%	17	5%	330
1990	839	7,543	6%	49	13%	1,009	1%	10	6%	416
1994	815	7,401	3%	24	11%	778	2%	15	4%	319
1998	729	7,671	3%	22	10%	775	1%	9	4%	329
2000	755	8,127	4%	31	13%	1,048	3%	23	5%	424
2005	955	8,700	7%	68	8%	692	5%	46	4%	357

\*ARL collects data on new hires and new professionals only every five years and these data are available only from those libraries that are reporting the optional demographic data. The percentages of new hires and new professionals for the years in which these data are collected are applied to the total population figures in order to impute estimates of the populations of new hires and new professionals.

such disruptions emerge as the Canadian youth movement grows, and is joined by the imminent US youth movement?

### The US Youth Movement

That high retirements should lead to a youth movement is perhaps a matter of common sense, but it has also been quantified in the form of two age-profile projections conducted on the US ARL data set in 1996 and 2003.<sup>6</sup> Table 2 combines the imputed number of librarians under 35 in US ARL university libraries from the ARL data sets with projected numbers for 2010, 2015, and 2020 based on the 2000 data.

The imputed number of US professionals under 35 has been increasing modestly since 1994, adding a net of between 75 and 150 individuals in each five-year period. The apparent jump in the imputed number of professionals under 35 between 2005 and 2010 is nothing more than an artifact of moving from the imputed data set to the projected data, but it is worth noting that both data sets reflect similarly modest growth.

Retirements do not, of course, result in a one-to-one demand for young professionals, even when administrators refill vacant positions. In fact, both the actual and projected data sets suggest that growth of the 35–39 age cohort will surpass that of the under 35 cohorts, a reflection of the aging of the MLS student population.<sup>7</sup> Older MLS students are surely the reason that the youngest of the projected age curves is nonetheless older than the 1986 curve. Barring a

transformational shift in the demographics of entry into the profession, the ARL population will never be as young as it was in 1986.

### Retirement-Driven Disruption in the ARL Workforce

Estimating the degree of retirement-based disruption in the market for library professionals is an enormously complex proposition, on the order of the federal government's *Library Manpower* study of 1975,<sup>8</sup> or the current IMLS-funded *Future of Librarians in the Workforce* project.<sup>9</sup> To make a case for serious disruption in the ARL population, however, one will need to account for what appears to be a very healthy supply of potential professionals and the modest demand for professionals among ARL libraries. The supply side begins with library education, where one could ask whether chronic shortages are possible in a profession where most individuals hold a one-year masters degree. Indeed, enrollments in library degree programs doubled from 13,123 in 1985 to 26,521 in 2003, the most recent data available.<sup>10</sup> As high as library school enrollments are, they seriously understate the supply of library professionals, however. The need for new kinds of expertise have driven ARL libraries to hire a substantial and growing number of individuals with no library education. In 2005, 20% of new hires in US ARL university libraries had no library education, compared to just 7% in 1986.

On the demand side, while the ARL data cannot support formal estimates, it is instructive to note the

imputed number of new hires and new professionals between 1986 and 2005 (see Table 3). If the Canadian ARL population is indeed five years ahead of the US, the number of new hires and new professionals in US ARL libraries could double in 2010.

As always with demographic data, speaking about the future involves varying degrees of certainty. For example, in US ARL libraries, high levels of retirements appear inevitable through 2015, and those retirements will drive a significant increase in new hires and new professionals, creating a significant youth movement. This will occur even if the overall new hire numbers do not double, as they did among Canadian ARL libraries between 2000 and 2005. But there remains considerable uncertainty as to whether the imminent youth movement will also produce noticeable disruptions in staffing. Broadly speaking, the healthy supply of library professionals argues instead for a smooth transition to a younger population, with new skill sets to address changing needs.

<sup>1</sup> Stanley J. Wilder, *Demographic Change in Academic Librarianship* (Washington DC: ARL, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> James G. Neal, "Raised by Wolves: Integrating the New Generation of Feral Professionals into the Academic Library," *Library Journal*, February 15, 2006, <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6304405.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley J. Wilder, "The New Library Professional," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 20, 2007, <http://chronicle.com/jobs/news/2007/02/2007022001c/careers.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Stanley J. Wilder, *The Age Demographics of Academic Librarians: A Profession Apart: A Report Based on Data from the ARL Annual Salary Survey* (Washington DC: ARL, 1995); and Wilder, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> A "new hire" is an individual with a value of 0 or 1 in the variable "years in position." A "new professional" is an individual with a value of 0 or 1 in the variable "years of professional experience."

<sup>6</sup> The projections exclude professionals in Canadian ARL libraries to remove the complexity of accounting for Canada's unique labor environment.

<sup>7</sup> Wilder, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Library Manpower: A Study of Demand and Supply* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1975).

<sup>9</sup> <http://libraryworkforce.org/tiki-index.php>

<sup>10</sup> ALISE, *Library and Information Science Education Statistical Report 2004*, <http://ils.unc.edu/ALISE/2004/Contents.htm>.

## ARL SALARY SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

by Mark Young, ARL Statistics Liaison

The recently published *ARL Annual Salary Survey* reports that ARL librarians' 2006–07 salaries continue to outperform inflation after lagging in the first few years of the new millennium. The combined median salary for US and Canadian ARL university libraries rose to \$59,648—a 4.5% gain over the past year. This kept pace with inflation in the US, where the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 4.1%, and outperformed inflation in Canada, where the CPI increased 2.4%. The median nonuniversity library salary increased to \$80,124—a 5.3% increase that is almost double the increase seen in 2005–06.

Median *beginning* salary increases have slowed after some sharp jumps in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The median beginning professional salaries in university libraries increased by \$2,080 to an even \$40,000 in 2006–07. ARL nonuniversity libraries saw their median beginning salary jump still more, from \$38,673 in 2005–06 to \$42,765 in 2006–07, an increase of 10.6%.

The Canadian dollar has rebounded significantly against the American dollar in recent years, and that trend continued in the current fiscal year, as the exchange rate used to convert Canadian salaries into US dollars rose to Can\$1.16289 = US\$1, the strongest the Canadian dollar has been since the 1992–93 survey.<sup>1</sup> Canadian university libraries recorded a median salary in US dollars of \$63,112, more than 11.8% greater than last year, and exceeding the US universities' median salary for the first time since 1996–97. Universities in the US reported a median salary of \$57,173.

The New England, Pacific, and Middle Atlantic regions continue to have the highest average salaries in the United States. The gap between salaries in private US ARL university libraries and those paid in publicly supported US ARL university libraries decreased to 6.3%, or an average of \$3,943. Libraries with more than 110 professional staff members have the highest average salary, \$68,331, compared to \$64,482 at libraries with professional staffs of 75–110, \$63,065 at libraries with staffs of 22–49, and \$62,383 at libraries with staffs of 50–74. The difference in salaries between the highest- and lowest-paying size cohort is \$5,266, about 18% smaller than last year's gap of \$6,419.

The gender gap in ARL university library salaries still exists, even though the libraries have remained approximately 65% female since 1980–81. The average salary for men at all ARL universities was \$66,492, while women's salaries averaged \$63,626—96% of the men's average salary, compared to 95.5% in 2005–06. Average salaries for men surpass those of women in 20 of the 27 job categories that ARL tracks, up from 18 categories in 2005–06. As in past years, women average more experience