

## THE FUTURE OF LIBRARIANS IN THE US WORKFORCE

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The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has funded the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill to lead a once-in-decades project: "A National Study on the Future of Librarians in the Workforce." ARL is one of several partners collaborating with UNC-Chapel Hill School of Information and Library Science on the study. The two-year study began in 2005 and attempts to:

- identify the nature of anticipated labor shortages in the library and information science field over the next decade;
- assess the number and types of library and information science jobs that will become available in the US through retirement and new job creation;
- determine the skills that will be required to fill such vacancies; and
- recommend effective approaches to recruiting and retaining workers for these jobs.

The project aims at providing better tools for workforce planning and management, a closer match of labor demand with supply, and improved recruitment and retention of librarians. The IMLS national study is expanding and enhancing available information on the library workforce in a rigorous and comprehensive way, across different types of libraries and other organizations. The main findings, predictions, and recommendations are broadly disseminated through the project's Web site.

Research libraries are collaborating on this project in several ways. The ARL Annual Salary Survey 2005–06 collected additional demographic data from member libraries and analysis of this data will contribute to the ongoing discussions within the project.<sup>1</sup> ARL's Martha Kyrillidou is participating in the Statistical Advisory Board for the study and is contributing to the survey design, methodology, and data analysis. In addition, Carla Stoffle (University of Arizona), Gary Strong (University of California, Los Angeles) and John Price Wilkin, (University of Michigan), serve on the Project Advisory Board. As part of the IMLS study, a series of literature reviews have been created focusing on workforce issues in different types of libraries, including academic librarians in the current workforce. Various white papers summarizing opinions regarding workforce trends within different types of libraries have been written as well.

One of the study's white papers examines university libraries and is based on the opinions of an expert panel.<sup>2</sup> The paper highlights the assumptions

that the librarian's role will continue to be key in an information-rich environment and that "a business climate surrounds all libraries in whatever size university, since the change of viewing information as a commodity has put a monetary value on both the information and the human resources working with it."<sup>3</sup> The paper discusses such workforce issues as culture, staffing, recruitment and retention, staff development and training, career paths, organizational development and leadership, changing constituencies or communities, innovation and collaboration, and globalization. The paper concludes:

...this white paper has been written to show the varied viewpoints of the committee from university libraries, and as such reflects everything from very positive visions about the future of the profession to more beleaguered or sober realizations that the profession as it has been does not have a rosy future. It is probably a safe assertion that there are varying degrees of agreement about every statement in the white paper, but perhaps that best demonstrates the challenges ahead as university libraries look in to the crystal ball and determine their plans for that future.

The workforce study will conduct a series of surveys this fall—both at the institutional and individual level—collecting extensive and hard-to-compile information. The sponsors, researchers, and partnering organizations would like to encourage participation in these data-collection activities. For more information on the "Future of Librarians in the Workforce" study, including its research documentation described above, see the project Web site <http://www.libraryworkforce.org/>.

<sup>1</sup> For earlier analysis based on ARL data, see: Stanley J. Wilder, *Demographic Change in Academic Librarianship* (Washington, DC: ARL, 2003); Stanley J. Wilder, "New Hires in Research Libraries: Demographic Trends and Hiring Priorities," *ARL: A Bimonthly Report*, no. 221 (April 2002): 5–8; Stanley J. Wilder, "Demographic Trends Affecting Professional Technical Services Staffing in ARL Libraries," *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 34, no. 1/2 (2002): 53–57; Stanley J. Wilder, "Generational Change and the Niche for Librarians," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 22 (1996): 385–386; Stanley J. Wilder, *The Age Demographics of Academic Librarians: A Profession Apart* (Washington, DC: ARL, 1995); also, see special issue of *ARL: A Bimonthly Report*, no. 208/209 (February/April 2000), [http://www.arl.org/newsltr/208\\_209/](http://www.arl.org/newsltr/208_209/).

<sup>2</sup> The university library panel's composition was: Rosann Bazirjian (University Librarian, University of North Carolina at Greensboro Libraries), Doris R. Brown (Associate Vice President, Teaching and Learning Resources, DePaul University), William Welburn (Associate Professor, School of Information Resources & Library Science, University of Arizona), Ann Wolpert (University Librarian, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Libraries), and Peter Zhou (Assistant University Librarian and Director of East Asian Library, University of California, Berkeley).

<sup>3</sup> "IMLS Task Force on Future of Librarians in the Workforce—University Librarians," December 8, 2006, [http://libraryworkforce.org/tiki-download\\_file.php?galleryId=18&fileId=59](http://libraryworkforce.org/tiki-download_file.php?galleryId=18&fileId=59).