The 21st Century Library Workforce

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The 8Rs Research Team

University of Alberta
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Starting Question

○ What demographics and labour market trends do we need to explore so that we can better understand our workforce needs and staffing composition and also develop strategies for planning and decision-making.

VS

○ Will there be a shortage of librarians in the next 5 to 10 years due to mass retirements?
In the process we learned that there was no clear succession crisis BUT there were issues of urgency in the Canadian library workforce:

- Recruitment rather than retirement should become the focus
- Competencies, particularly management and leadership competencies, are key
- Workloads and work-life balance need to be monitored
- Role overlap between librarians and paraprofessionals is increasing and needs thoughtful oversight
- Diversity of our workforce is an issue and needs attention
Objective

Comprehensive investigation of issues around the 8Rs:

- Recruitment
- Retention
- Retirement
- Remuneration
- Repatriation
- Reaccreditation
- Rejuvenation
- Restructuring
Project Scope

- 3-year study (2003 – 2006) of unprecedented breadth and depth
- 167 data tables
- Over 900 variables
- 275-page report (English and French)
- Analyses of data by library sectors and sub-sectors
Methods

  - 1,357 surveys sent to libraries
  - 34% response rate overall (461 respondents)
  - 36% public libraries
  - 50% academic libraries (including a census of CARL libraries)
  - 26% special libraries

  - Web survey sent to 8,626 library workers
  - Response rate of 36.5% (3,148 respondents)
  - Additional 1,545 responses collected through listserv
Workforce Demographics and Perceptions of Work
Table C.10: Age Category of Librarians and Paraprofessionals by Library Sector (Individual Survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Sector</th>
<th>Professional Librarians (n=1,886)</th>
<th>Paraprofessional Staff (n=1,560)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 45</td>
<td>45-54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ACADEMIC</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL PUBLIC</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SPECIAL</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SCHOOL</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
79% of librarians and paraprofessionals state they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their jobs.
Agreeing workload manageable
- Librarians: 39%
- Paraprofessionals: 53%

Agreeing they have little job-related stress
- Librarians: 24%
- Paraprofessionals: 35%
Recruitment and Retirement
Table E.6 Predicted Librarian Retirements Within the Next 5 and 10 Years (Individual Survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retirement Scenario</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Estimated # in Librarian Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scenario 1: Assuming retire at 60</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirements by 2009</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirements by 2014</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scenario 2: Assuming retire at 62</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirements by 2009</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirements by 2014</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scenario 3: Assuming retire at 65</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirements by 2009</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirements by 2014</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table J.3: Predicted Future Librarian Supply

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Current Librarian Workforce</th>
<th>New Librarian Entrants</th>
<th>Departures from Retirement</th>
<th>Future Librarian Workforce</th>
<th>Future Librarians as % of Current Librarians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In 5 years (2009)</td>
<td>11,700</td>
<td>+1,600</td>
<td>-1,870</td>
<td>11,430</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In 10 years (2014)</td>
<td>11,700</td>
<td>+3,250</td>
<td>-4,560</td>
<td>10,390</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Table J.5: Predicted Future Library Technician Supply

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Current Library Technician Workforce</th>
<th>New Library Technician Entrants</th>
<th>Departures from Retirement</th>
<th>Future Library Technician Workforce</th>
<th>Future Library Technicians as % of Current Technicians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In 5 years (2009)</td>
<td>10,360</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>-1,350</td>
<td>10,210</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In 10 years (2014)</td>
<td>10,360</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>-3,500</td>
<td>9,260</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Competencies and Professional Development
Institutions’ Stated Most Important / Difficult to Fulfill Competencies

- 42%: Leadership potential
- 40%: Managerial skills
- 39%: Ability to respond flexibly to change
- 32%: Can handle high-volume workload
- 32%: Innovation
Librarian Interest in Management and Leadership Roles

- Librarians stating “it is important to have a job that allows me to....”
  - Seek out new project opportunities: 74%
  - Motivate others: 64%
  - Perform a leadership role: 62%
  - Manage a service/dept: 44%
  - Supervise others: 36%
Types of Training Provided to Librarians by Library Sector

- **Technology skills training**
  - TOTAL: 69
  - Public: 69
  - Academic: 73
  - Special: 64

- **Job-oriented skills training**
  - TOTAL: 59
  - Public: 63
  - Academic: 66
  - Special: 46

- **Management training**
  - TOTAL: 43
  - Public: 46
  - Academic: 49
  - Special: 33

- **Leadership training**
  - TOTAL: 35
  - Public: 35
  - Academic: 44
  - Special: 26
Role Shifts

Traditional librarian duties are being taken on in an increasing capacity by paraprofessional staff

- 78% of institutions reported that paraprofessionals have taken on more of these responsibilities over the past 5 years

- Role shift is expected to continue to over the next 5 years
Challenges

- Recruitment (to the field and to institutions) isn’t solely about numbers, but about qualities and competencies.
- Retirements offer opportunity, can institutions capitalize upon them?
- Recognize shifts in workload as well as potential of staff and re-design services and processes in order to better meet the needs of faculty and students.
Implications

- We see no imminent crisis in library staff supply and demand
- We haven’t shattered the myth of a shortage in the library workforce, but redirected it to a discussion of recruitment and needed competencies of all staff
- We need to attract the best and brightest to the profession and to individual libraries
Implications

- We need to ensure strong candidates get leadership and management development opportunities and that there is understanding these are necessary roles.

- We need to focus on competencies and skills development of all staff.
  - How will libraries predict what competencies are needed?
Implications

- We need to examine the shifting roles of librarian and paraprofessional staff, particularly segmentation of responsibilities and needed competencies of new and existing staff.
- We need to think about succession planning holistically, from the bottom to the top of the organization, including new roles and responsibilities, and acknowledging that we need to plan for a more diverse workforce.
Getting the Information Out

- 2006 Study report available for free download (both English and French): http://www.ls.ualberta.ca/8rs

- 2008 Library Human Resources Summit

- 2010 *The Future is Now* monograph
The Perfect Storm: Rethinking Service at the University of Alberta Libraries

Kathleen De Long
Pam Ryan
Anne Carr-Wiggin
Alexa Jaffurs
The Perfect Storm

• Staff demographics / impending retirements

• Change in volume of transactional services

• Availability of self-service technologies

• LibQual comments indicated needed service improvements – particularly around standard of service
About Us

Campus Community:
• over 30,000 undergraduates, ~6000 graduate students
• ~3500 academic staff
• Union environment

Libraries:
• 82 professionals, ~200 support staff, ~ 100 student workers
• 11th in ARL investment index
• 8 libraries with 2 libraries on other campuses
Service Vision

• Each library will have one service desk, open all hours the library is open

• Public Services staff (librarians and para-professionals) will provide information, technology, and library-use customer services

• Desk staffed to meet user demand to ensure a timely response

• Access Services staff ensuring that the processing and handling of library materials continues during all open hours
Implementation

- Staff needed a wide range of skills - circulation, reference (in person, IM, email) and technology support

- Training and assessment was critical; resulted in development of standards and competencies for public service work.

- Reworking of staffing and organizational structures (new public service and access services units)
Outcomes

• Easy, intuitive, one place to go

• Holistic service (at the desk and beyond with merged service and referral)

• Recognition that all of our public services need to be of consistently high quality and value.

• New eyes on old policies and new appreciation of the work of others