

ARL LIBRARY DIRECTOR SURVEY RESULTS

James Neal

We are now moving to that portion of the conference where we would like to share with you the results of the four surveys that we conducted on area librarianship. I want to emphasize that the data that we are going to be presenting represents gross level data, just some summary responses that we have drawn from the survey results that we have received. We believe that there is a great deal of additional analysis that can be done with the statistics. We have not moved to another layer of analysis, but we do plan to do that.

About a year and a half ago I had the opportunity to tour several of the libraries in Japan and participate in a conference there. I was very impressed with the continuing American preoccupation with the Japanese experience, which was evident by the large number of American groups of all different types and backgrounds that were moving around the country, and I became aware of one group that was touring Japanese farms. I heard the story of a Japanese farmer who was giving a tour of his farm to a Texas tycoon, and he noted that the farm extended from that fence all the way down to that railroad track from that hill all the way down to that line of palms. The Texas tycoon, after having had this tour, was very impressed, and he said yes, you have a wonderful farm here in Japan, just outside of Tokyo, but I want to tell you about my stead back in Texas. He said, in the morning, I jump into my Cadillac, and I drive and I drive and I drive all day, and by the time the sun is coming down, I still haven't reached the end of my property. The Japanese farmer looked at him very quizzically and he said, "You know, I once had a car like that too and I had the same problem." Different perspectives; different hearing of the same facts.

What we are going to try to present to you today are four perspectives on the issue of the future of area librarianship. We conducted surveys of library directors at ARL institutions, the deans of American library schools, the directors of area centers, Title VI and non-Title VI, and area librarians themselves. We initially surveyed the library directors and I will present those data to you, and then Mary, Denise, and Nancy will proceed with presenting the three other surveys. When those surveys have been presented, we are going to open it up for general questions on what we have learned.

The reason we started with the library directors' survey was because we used that as the source of information for the names and assignments of area librarians in those libraries, as well as for the names of the area centers on that campus. That became the database for the two follow up surveys. The library director surveys were sent to 104 institutions. This represented the membership of ARL based in the United States; we did not include Canadian institutions. We received surveys from 90 institutions, for a return rate of about 86%. We have been in touch with the fourteen institutions that have not replied, and verbally we have verified that 12 of those 14 institutions do not have individuals who are area librarians by our definition. And the two that have area librarians will provide the data prior to the finalization of our results. So you see that we did have a very healthy and very substantive response from the directors of the North American research libraries. It took some harassment, but we did get a good response.

In those 90 institutions, 65, or 72% of the institutions have individuals with area librarian assignments. Twenty-five, 28%, do not. Nancy Schmidt will go into more detail about the area librarians themselves, but in those 65 institutions we were able to identify 564 positions that meet the general definition of area librarians. Fourteen of those positions were vacant; 92 of them were part-time. The data from Harvard and LC are incomplete because of the complexity of the area librarian assignments that cut across those two institutions. We will be working with them hopefully to get some more detailed information.

We are very interested in what the recent experience had been in recruiting librarians to area assignments in these libraries. We asked whether they had in fact conducted a search in the last five years to fill an area librarian position. Forty-three libraries, about half the institutions, 48%, in fact had conducted a search in the last five years. We then were interested in how many searches and here you can see the breakdown:

Positions	Institutions
1	15
2	19
3	3
4	4
6	1
7	2
8	1
9	1

Fifteen institutions had one search during that period, up to one institution that had nine searches during that period. We do not know if they were filling the same position over and over again, which my experience tells me might be the case, and I won't tell you which institution that was—I think it's represented in this room—or it may be nine different area librarian positions at that institution. So you see, there is some significant activity. I would like to do some turnover analysis, which is one of my research areas, on this data which will give us a little more insight as to the actual phenomenon of movement.

We were also interested in what the experience of these institutions had been with their most recent recruitment in this area. Fifty institutions did respond to this question, so I thought we had an appreciable set of information to work with. 88% of those recruitments in fact had taken place between 1990 and the present; 58% in the last two years, so there has been a significant level of activity in ARL institutions in terms of recruiting area librarians. And here you can see the breakout of the world areas in which those recruitments took place—East Asian being the largest number of positions being recruited down to South Asian with two. The other is a multiple category where individuals had assignments which cut across those world areas.

World Area	Positions
East Asian	15
Latin American	10
Slavic	6
Southeast Asian	5
West European	4
Middle Eastern	4
African	2
South Asian	2
Other	2

Again I think this is very interesting, but very gross level data, which opens itself to more detailed analysis. But you can begin to get a picture of the most recent activity in terms of the world areas that are focused on in terms of these recruitment activities.

We also were interested in what the results of that most recent recruitment have been. We asked about applications per position, and you can see that in most cases, at least in the cluster that had the largest representation, was 10 or fewer applicants for a position--which were fifteen of the fifty searches that I indicated, and here you can see the range.

Applicants Per Position	
1-10	15
11-20	9
21-30	9
Over 30	9
Unknown	8

One of the things I would like to look at is the comparison between these recruitment data and general recruitment data for academic library positions.

They also provided us information about the number of applicants interviewed. Here you can see that in the majority of cases, one to four individuals were in fact selected for interviews.

Applicants Interviewed	
1	4
2	10
3	17
4	8
5	3
7	1
Unknown	7

I was intrigued by the institutions that were able to select one individual for an interview. That is not something we can get away with at Indiana University, but in this case we may only have one qualified applicant for these types of positions.

We then asked the directors, or in some cases the associate directors who completed the survey, to tell us what they felt about this whole phenomena of area librarianship and whether they felt there was a need for a larger pool of area librarians. In this case, 61 of the individuals did respond to this question and by a very significant majority, 48 or 78%, there was a feeling that there is a need to expand the pool of individuals with the subject/language, professional, and technical expertise to step up to these type of assignments.

Do the institutions plan to increase the number of area librarians? By an overwhelming majority, no.

Plans to Increase Area Librarians

Yes	13	(14%)
No	66	(74%)
Unsure	11	(12%)

I think the commentary that followed this question spoke, as you would suspect, to the budgetary situations that were in place in many of these institutions. In retrospect, I think we probably should have asked a question regarding plans to decrease the number of area librarians, but I think out of fear we chose not to. We should probably know that, but maybe did not want to know. That is something that maybe we could pursue in a follow up.

Finally we asked these directors or their designates to tell us where they felt the highest priority should be assigned in terms of development activities or training activities in support of area librarianship. As you will see, and as others will report, this becomes an important theme--information technologies, language training and preparation, knowledge of the book trade and acquisition strategies in different world areas, and the ability to participate in grants and fund-raising activities. There were other items mentioned, but these consistently were the most important items cited by the library director respondents to the survey. Remember this is 90 institutions, nearly 90 percent of the ARL research libraries in the United States. So I think it is a significant body of data to begin to work with as we plot out a strategy. This represents the responses of the library directors. We will now move to a discussion of the results of the library school survey.