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THE EXPERT LIBRARY

STAFFING, SUSTAINING, AND ADVANCING THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

edited by

Scott Walter and Karen Williams

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ACADEMIC LIBRARY STAFFING A DECADE FROM NOW

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Introduction

Everyone knows that the world libraries inhabit is changing and that the revolution wrought by the Internet and related technologies will have a profound impact on academic libraries and on most other institutions that have information at their core. As academic libraries look to adjust their missions and the ways that they do business, they need to develop their core resource—their staff. The human capabilities a library possesses will either empower or constrain it, particularly in the next decade when an ability to change will be a prerequisite for academic library success.

Assembling a strong staff has always been a central concern, but the stakes are higher today and the challenges greater. Academic libraries will need to adjust their services and their approach to collections, and to do so they will need a staff with a different mix of skills and a willingness to explore new approaches and to break out of established ways of doing things. Libraries will have to build these new capacities at a time when resources will be constrained and when qualified staff will be difficult to find and hard to attract. The established patterns of professional status may also limit flexibility, and MLS programs may not bring us individuals with everything we are looking for.

In this chapter, I will try to provide a summary of the challenges facing academic libraries as they attempt to assemble the staffs they will need in the coming decade. I will begin by identifying the trends I see developing, which will define the kind of staff libraries will require. I will then look at what we can expect of the academic library workforce

in 2015. Many of the trends are already clear: the change in the mix of staff between librarians, other professionals, and clerical staff; the increasing need for technology skills for all staff; and the increased need for nonlibrarian professionals—both technologists and those with other expertise, such as human resources and development. Like many service professions, librarianship faces demographic challenges as the Baby Boom generation approaches and enters retirement, but in librarianship these trends are exacerbated by the increasing age of MLS graduates. Finally, I will also consider the organizational development and financial implications of these changes and how academic libraries can manage the transition from the staff they have now to the staff they will need to have a decade hence.

Trends—What the Future Holds

Looking out a decade at the work of academic libraries, what do we see? I would suggest that there are several trends, which are now evident, that will continue to play out and will shape the things that academic libraries do.¹

The first of these trends is that information tools will continue to grow in power and ease of use, and they will continue to migrate from commercial products purchased and provided by libraries in an access-controlled environment to network-level services that are freely available to anyone connected to the Internet. Google, Google Scholar, Wikipedia, and similarly structured tools will come to be the norm.² They will be powerful, easy to use, and free. A decade from now, academic libraries will still be purchasing materials, but this will be a less significant part of their work than it is today.

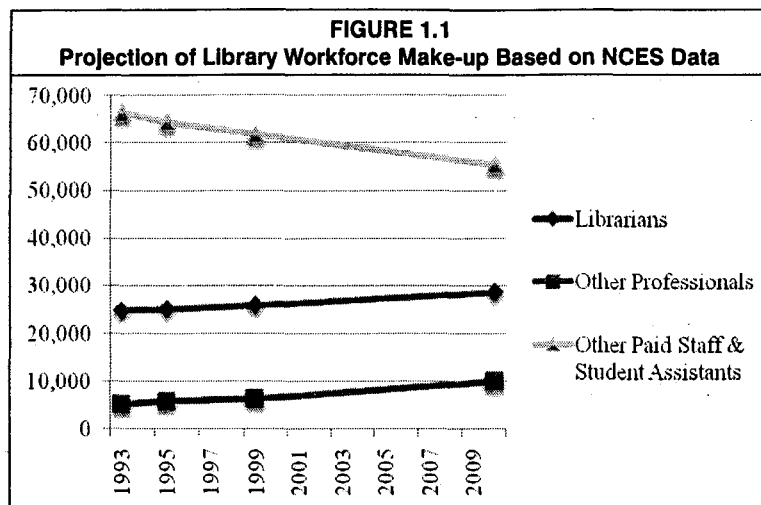
The second trend is related. Because many tools will be simpler to use and free, information-finding and evaluation skills will move from a profession practiced by librarians to a mass amateur activity. As Clay Shirky points out, this will parallel the mass amateurization of literacy that took place after the invention of the printing press.³ Information skills will be taught and learned from the earliest grades and across the curriculum. This will mean that most students will be able to find the information they need in most cases. Reference work will need to be focused on the truly difficult questions and may move from assistance in finding information to assistance in using it.

The third trend is that the growth of open scholarship will continue. We can expect commercial publishers to resist and fight this trend, and traditional publishing will not totally disappear, but the economic advantages of open scholarship are compelling, and it will be an increasingly important means of distributing knowledge. This will mean that many of the things libraries would previously have collected will be freely available on the Web. Mass digitization projects, especially the Google Book project, and the efforts of many libraries and other cultural heritage organizations to digitize their collections will add to the corpus of freely available, high-quality scholarly content.

The fourth trend builds on the third. Libraries and librarians will spend more time and effort in supporting users in creating knowledge rather than in consuming knowledge. They will assist researchers and students in archiving and making accessible the results of scholarship. This will include developing and supporting repositories of various sorts and assisting in a variety of open-access publishing initiatives. Some of these efforts may be straightforward, but others, such as those involving e-science, digital humanities, and new forms of publishing, will be complex and require skill sets not possessed by many academic librarians.

So in 2015, what will the landscape look like? Libraries will still be engaged in the traditional roles of building and organizing collections and assisting students and faculty in the use of these collections. However, this will represent a declining portion of the library's activities. The majority of the collections will be digital. The selection of materials will be less time-consuming, as many materials will be bought as large collections rather than on an item-by-item basis. The acquisition and cataloging of these collections will also be easier and cheaper because there will be fewer discrete purchases, and in many cases, cataloging records will be provided as part of the deal. The reference desk, if it exists at all, will be staffed mostly by nonlibrarians. Many questions, perhaps a majority, will not be posed in person; rather, they will be asked from a distance, using chat, texting, or whatever comes next. Instructional activities will be focused on incorporating information skills into the curriculum and on creating learning objects and developing assignments that can be integrated into course management systems.

The library building will be less a warehouse for print materials and more a center for a variety of informal and formal learning activi-



staff, and 26.6% were student assistants. If the 1998 to 2004 trends are extended to 2015 as straight-line extrapolations, 30.4% of academic library staff will be librarians, 10.7% will be other professionals, 35.7% will be nonprofessionals, and 23.2% will be student assistants. The NCES data are shown in table 1.1, and the projections through 2015 are shown in figure 1.1.

The straight-line extrapolation in figure 1.1 is probably conservative and likely underestimates the decline in the number of nonprofessional staff and student assistants, as we are likely to see an accelerating decline in the acquisition and use of paper collections. I also suspect that more other professionals will be hired as more specialized expertise is required. Stanley J. Wilder has documented the rise of “functional specialists” in ARL libraries.⁵ From 1985 to 2000, the number of positions in this category increased 169% to become the second largest category of new hires in ARL libraries. The majority of these positions involved information technology.

I would predict that the mix of staffing in 2015 is more likely to be 30% librarians, 20% other professionals, and 50% nonprofessionals and student assistants.

The breakdown between other staff and student assistants is difficult to predict. If the existing trends continue, 30% of library staff would be other staff and 20% student assistants, but it could easily be

the other way around if libraries opt to maintain levels of student assistants, either to provide student work opportunities for their campuses or to save money.

The number of librarians is likely to continue to increase gradually; however, most of the new members of academic library staffs will be other professionals. This group could go from representing 20% of the professional workforce to being close to 40%.

Current Trends in the Academic Librarian Job Market

Analyzing the academic library job market has been the focus of a number of studies. They are useful in establishing trends and pointing out the directions the field is heading.

In 2000, Penny M. Beile and Megan M. Adams reviewed 900 academic library job announcements published in four journals in 1996.⁶ They noted a significant decrease in technical services positions generally and in cataloging positions in particular. They also noted that there were more specialist positions, a growing preference for computer skills, and what they described as the “most dramatic trend”—an increase in the acceptance of degrees other than the MLS for professional positions. Karen Croneis and Pat Henderson reviewed the position announcements that appeared in *College & Research Libraries News* between 1990 and 2000 that included the word *electronic* or *digital*.⁷ Not surprisingly, they found a dramatic increase in the number of such announcements. Many of the positions were traditional activities in, as the authors put it, “technologically sophisticated surroundings.” At the same time, they noted an increase in the number of digital project and project management positions. These positions appear to be for responsibilities that few libraries undertook in the past.

Claudene Sproles and David Ratledge analyzed entry-level position announcements for a 20-year period beginning in 1982 and noted an overall decline in the number of position announcements.⁸ They also found a decline in the number of technical services positions. The number of systems positions increased but remained a small portion of the total positions, though the demand for computer experience increased in all types of positions. Joan Starr’s similar study comparing job announcements in 1983 and 2003 had similar findings, as did a study by Beverly P. Lynch and Kimberley Robles Smith that reviewed announce-

ments in *College & Research Libraries News* between 1973 and 1998.⁹ Jane Kinkus attempted to document an increase in the requirement for project management skills by reviewing job announcements in 1993, 2003, and 2004.¹⁰ Her data are not conclusive but seem to indicate an increased demand for this set of skills. John Shank's 2006 study of instructional design librarian job announcements yielded a very small number of announcements, but the existence of "blended librarian," with both traditional library credentials and instructional design skills, as an emerging library specialty was given some support.¹¹

This research confirms the NCES data and documents several trends that we can expect to continue. First, there is an increased demand for technological expertise, whether in the form of computer skills for traditional positions or in the form of new roles such as management of digital projects or instructional design. Second, we see a decline in some areas of traditional library practice, particularly cataloging. Finally, we see an increase in specialist, often technology, positions, some of which have degree requirements other than the MLS.

Demographics

Academic librarians are old and have become increasingly older in comparison to similar professions such as teaching, social work, or nursing. To quote Wilder's frank assessment, "librarians are unusually old."¹²

In 1995, Wilder projected that in 2010 in ARL libraries, nearly 25% of academic librarians would be 50 to 54 years old, nearly 25% more would be 55 to 59 years old, and about 9% more would be over 60 years of age. Only approximately 15% of academic librarians in ARL libraries in 2010 would be under 40 years old. By 2020, according to Wilder's 1995 projections, not quite 45% of ARL librarians will be over 50, and about 23% will be under 40.¹³ In 2020, the last of the Baby Boom generation will still be a decade from retirement.

Wilder's 2003 study confirms his earlier findings and provides a more nuanced analysis of the demographics of academic libraries. Beyond the aging of the Baby Boom generation, several factors are at work. The first is the decline in the number of young women choosing traditionally female-dominated professions, especially librarianship, because of increased opportunities in other professions, such as law and medicine. Secondly, there has been a marked increase in the age

of those receiving MLS degrees. Between 1983 and 2001, the percentage of those receiving MLS degrees who were 40 years old or older rose from 16.4% to 35.0%.¹⁴ In 2001, over a third of the newly minted MLS graduates were of the Baby Boom generation.

Wilder's 2003 study also provides some assessment of management and leadership positions in ARL libraries. As with the general population of ARL librarians, he notes an aging in managerial positions. Between 1986 and 2000, the percentage of ARL managers under 45 years of age declined from 54.5% to 21.7%.¹⁵ A similar trend can be seen with ARL directors. In 1986, 47.2% of ARL directors were under 50 years old. By 2000, this number had fallen to 25.0%.¹⁶ One implication of the increase in the age of managers and directors is that the current generation of young librarians will have less opportunity to advance into management positions until much later in their careers than the generation that preceded them. Wilder's data do not address this issue particularly, but it seems likely that advancement opportunities are increasingly unavailable until individuals are at a stage of their lives when they are less mobile. Thus libraries may find that they have mid-career librarians who have had few advancement opportunities and are now geographically constrained by family and community ties.

As noted above, in 2015 the trends that Wilder documents will still be playing out and academic libraries will still have a large cadre of aging Baby Boomers occupying most of the managerial and leadership positions. But the end will be in sight. The Baby Boomers will begin retiring in 2015, though the majority will not be leaving the workforce until a few years later. As Wilder points out, "The management issue resulting from the aging of librarianship is thus not retirements; it is how to obtain new entrants in sufficient numbers, quality, and expertise to replace retirees and to keep the cycle turning."¹⁷ Wilder concludes on an optimistic note: "Libraries have discovered needs for new kinds of expertise. We may be fortunate that at the very moment that information undergoes its biggest revolution since Gutenberg, librarianship appears positioned to take on substantial numbers of new people with new skills to help it adapt."¹⁸ I am not so sure. There is a decade to go before there will be significant openings; this is a long time, and recruitment of the required level of talent will be challenging. This will create a pipeline problem that will be discussed below.

Generational Changes

The Baby Boom generation of librarians came of age in the time before catalogs were computer-based. They were the generation that brought automation and the library instruction movement to academic libraries. But many of the changes that were wrought by Baby Boomers in their youth are now being overwhelmed by the newer network-level technologies. In 1980, Brian Nielsen predicted the demise of online searching as a responsibility of professional librarians.¹⁹ While it seems hard to imagine today, Nielsen's thesis created quite a stir. This early loss of the need for professional expertise was followed by many more losses both large and small, so that much of the knowledge and many of the skills that 25 years ago comprised the core professional competencies of an academic librarian are now unimportant or irrelevant. This is not to say that librarians of this generation have not adapted, for in many cases they have. In many cases, these librarians have a deep knowledge of their campuses and strong relationships with faculty. When the Baby Boom generation of librarians retires, it will be a loss.

Lynne C. Lancaster provides a good summary of the generational differences and the issues they raise for libraries.²⁰ She cautions that libraries need to watch out for Boomer burnout as the Boomers deal with multiple pressures from job and family or as they get restless and bored. Lancaster describes Gen Xers in this way: "Highly independent, entrepreneurial, and comfortable with change, this group entered the work world with a healthy degree of skepticism. Not deluded by the idea that employers would keep them around for a lifetime, Xers took charge of their careers early on and have been willing to leave a job if their needs weren't being met."²¹ Boomers often misunderstand Gen Xers, who they see as not appropriately dedicated to their jobs. Arthur P. Young, Peter Hennon, and Ronald Powell found that there was a difference in the views of leadership attributes between Gen X librarians and library directors and that the differences were in line with other observations of Gen Xers.²² As Pixey Anne Mosley puts it in her article on mentoring Gen X managers, "To many Generation Xers, because of their lack of tolerance for bureaucracy and hierarchies, being a library director is not a presumed goal."²³

Susanne Markgren and her colleagues surveyed librarians who had switched jobs in the past five years, most of whom were Gen Xers, and found most of the moves were to new institutions, and many were lateral moves.²⁴ Lack of opportunity, financial constraints, and lack of challenging work were cited as reasons for leaving. A lack of support and encouragement for professional development and continuing education was also cited as a concern. Reviewing their findings, Markgren and her colleagues state:

New librarians certainly feel that a generational gap exists between them and their senior colleagues. Many are worried that their more seasoned peers view them as disloyal professionals who are only using their current positions as stepping stones and will resent them for their mobility. In fact, many attribute the dissatisfaction with their positions and the profession to the inability of older generations to understand and accept them as peers.²⁵

The generational difference, especially between Boomers and Gen Xers, will exacerbate the demographic challenges academic libraries face in the recruitment and retention of talented librarians.

Organizational Challenges

It is clear that the coming decades will require staff, particularly librarians, who are not wed to traditional roles and who are flexible and willing to learn new skills and to remake their jobs.

There will also be an influx of new professional staff, most of whom will work with technology and many of whom will not have MLS degrees. This will be particularly true in light of what will likely be problems in the recruitment of librarians. The skills these non-MLS professionals bring will be required for organizational success in academic libraries, but they will often be outside the traditional power structures that have been dominated by librarians.

There will be a decline in the number of nonprofessional and student staff. This decline will be gradual and in most libraries should be manageable through attrition. There may be some tension in libraries that try to maintain their current levels of student staffing at the expense of nonprofessional staff.

There are several trends that are likely to lead to organizational challenges in the near future of many academic libraries. The two most pressing challenges will be these:

- recruiting librarians
- resolving the tensions that can be expected from the increase in non-MLS professionals in libraries

To meet these challenges, we must develop organizations and embrace organizational cultures that foster a new balance of power among professional communities or that eliminate the distinction between traditional library professionals and “new” library professionals.

Recruiting Librarians: The Pipeline Problem

There are a variety of issues confronting academic libraries as they attempt to recruit the new librarians they need. There are questions about the pool of MLS students, about what is taught in MLS programs, about salaries, and about the geographic mobility of beginning librarians. All of this leads to fewer applicants for academic library positions, as well as disappointment about the quality of the preparation these applicants have received for our changing profession. Stephen T. Bajjalý's study of recruitment in libraries indicates that a typical applicant pool contains 15 individuals, and 43% of those conducting the search rated the quality of the applicant pool as “less than they expected.”²⁶ In addition, there is what Malcolm Gladwell calls the “mismatch problem,” whereby inappropriate criteria are used to limit applicant pools, which makes hiring librarians even less likely to be successful.

Who Gets an MLS Degree?

In 2003, *Library Journal* ran a series of three articles assessing the recruitment and retention of MLS students. The survey of students in MLS programs showed that 70% had worked in libraries and that this experience was a primary reason for their choosing to pursue the degree. Deans and directors of graduate programs estimated that 50% to 80% of their students were recruited from full-time jobs in libraries.²⁷ As noted above, students in MLS programs are getting older. Given the role of library work experience in the decision to pursue the degree, this should come as no surprise.

In concluding the article reporting on the *Library Journal* survey results, John Berry summarized the situation as he saw it:

While the body of people recruited from libraries is generally diverse and guarantees new librarians with great faith in the profession, it tends to make for an older constituency of students, deeply rooted in libraries as they exist. The library of the future may have difficulty being born in that culture. . . . If the field needs new blood, if it needs younger librarians who have more of their careers ahead of them, if it needs thinking that is brand new, out of the box, to create the library of the future, it needs a younger generation of recruits to go with the strong librarians brought in from libraries today. To find that new generation, LIS schools will have to seek candidates from somewhere beyond libraries. The best place will be among the general undergraduate population.²⁸

What Library Schools Teach

The MLS degree is most often a one-year program that faces the challenging task of squeezing in instruction in a wide variety of competencies. Critics of the results are everywhere. Youngok Choi and Edie Rasmussen end their article on the educational requirements of future digital librarians by saying, “Based on this survey, it appears that LIS education needs to pay attention to additional education in interpersonal and communication skills and integration of practical skills and experience with digital collection management and digital technologies into curricula.”²⁹ Mark Winston and Gretchen Ebeler Hazlin document a lack of marketing training in MLS programs.³⁰ Ingrid Hsieh-Yee expresses concerns about the quality of cataloging instruction.³¹ Patricia Promís makes a case for Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a critical competency for librarians. While stressing that many parties are responsible for assuring that librarians develop this competency, she focuses attention on library schools: “For obvious reasons, library schools have traditionally focused on developing cognitive and hard skills. Today, they are looking for ways to expand and enhance the curriculum by incorporating soft competencies into programs.”³² As John Berry says in a 2004 *Library Journal* editorial entitled “Don’t Dis the LIS ‘Crisis’”:

At every school I've visited in the past three years, students complain about the lack of courses and choices in traditional library areas. The other very common grievance comes from recent graduates about the courses they were mandated to take, either because they were the only ones available or because they were required technology courses. Many found their studies of little use on their first jobs.³³

There are many complaints, but in the end, the state of library education may not really matter. Stephen T. Bajjaly documents that employers don't seem to care what courses were taken in MLS programs or where the degree was earned.³⁴ In his study, only 1% of employers ranked courses taken during the MLS program as critical, and 44% ranked this factor as not that important. Only 6% ranked MLS program attended as critical, and 47% ranked it as not that important.

Salaries and Other Constraints

The most recent *Library Journal* survey of salaries and placements reports a median starting salary of \$40,000 and mean starting salary of \$39,000 for 2006 MLS graduates finding work in academic librarians.³⁵ ARL reported a \$40,000 median starting salary for beginning librarians in its 2006–07 salary survey.³⁶ Figures collected by the National Association of Colleges and Employers show that the salaries of beginning academic librarians trail salaries commanded by undergraduates with degrees in science, engineering, or business, often by more than 25%. Beginning academic library salaries are about 15% above those received by undergraduate liberal arts graduates, however.³⁷

Many new MLS graduates are not geographically mobile. The *Library Journal* followed up its 2007 placements and salaries survey with a survey that indicated that only 16% of 2006 MLS graduates moved outside their home region and that, "As a group, graduates said that finding the ideal location, one where they were willing to move their families and where salaries were acceptable, was tricky."³⁸

We can expect that the best MLS graduates, who have the personal and technical characteristics libraries desire and who are geographically mobile, will be in high demand, and this may drive up salaries for these beginning librarians. This upward push on salaries will either

ripple up to previously hired librarians, or it will create salary compression.

The Mismatch Problem

In his talk at the 2008 New Yorker Conference "Stories from the Near Future," Malcolm Gladwell discussed the challenge of hiring in the modern world and what he calls the "mismatch problem."³⁹ Citing the sports combine as a clear example, Gladwell argues that the predictors most of us use in hiring do not match the skills that will be required to do the job. For those not familiar with professional sports, a "combine" is an event held before the annual draft that brings together the most promising athletes and puts them through a series of physical, intellectual, and psychological tests aimed at providing teams with the information required to make the most successful draft picks. As Gladwell notes, it turns out that there is almost no correlation between success in a sports combine and success as a professional player. As is often the case in regard to the criteria set up for teachers under the No Child Left Behind law, he argues, the criteria used by professional sports teams to evaluate the future success of top recruits may appear reasonable, but their application routinely limits the pool of applicants at precisely the point when it should be expanded. Gladwell argues that the sports combine and similar procedures that we put in place to aid in hiring are an attempt to create certainty when that certainty is illusory. As the workplace has become more complex, as it has in every profession, the only real way to tell whether or not someone can do the job is to let the person do it and evaluate his or her success. The world has changed, Gladwell concludes, but the way we staff our organizations has not.

Not surprisingly, Gladwell does not mention librarians in this talk, but it seems obvious to me that libraries also face a mismatch problem when hiring. We use the MLS degree as a filter when it is far from clear that what is taught or the criteria for getting into MLS programs are at all related to what we need in professionals in academic libraries.

The MLS degree is certainly not an indicator of the soft skills, such as flexibility, initiative, and ability to work in teams and with diverse populations, that academic libraries need in professional employees. It is also the case that many libraries do not structure new hires in a way that allows for relatively quick assessment and decision on con-

tinuing employment. Rather, many faculty librarian positions have what amounts to a five- to seven-year probationary period, and many nonfaculty positions follow similar patterns. In addition, as Promí notes, libraries often do not advertise for what they really want. As she says, "The present study demonstrates that a significant percentage of job advertisements are not designed to attract emotionally intelligent individuals, but rather those with specific hard skills. On the one hand, the profession is clamoring for these missing soft skills. On the other hand, employers are not soliciting them at the point when positions are advertised."⁴⁰

It is not clear how academic libraries can solve their mismatch problem, but the most likely approach would be to expand the talent pool by looking for professionals without the MLS.

Librarians and Non-MLS Professionals

I believe it is likely that this area will be among the most problematic facing academic library leaders over the next decade. It requires addressing the fundamental issues of who is a librarian and what are the appropriate roles for other library professionals. It requires new organizational solutions in the light of deeply entrenched traditional practice. Success in this endeavor is critical if libraries are to develop new and innovative resources and services, but such success will be very challenging to achieve.

The Balance of Librarians and Other Professional Staff

It is likely that the number of librarians in academic libraries will grow slightly over the next decade, but there will be a significant influx of other professionals. The new balance of professional staffing between librarians and other professional staff will have the potential to create tensions between the two groups. As Wilder points out, these new functional specialists are "simply different from their colleagues elsewhere in the library. They have fewer MLS degrees, there are more males, and they have fewer years of professional experience but earn higher pay."⁴¹

To the extent that class distinctions and salaries, benefits, and expectations of research and service based on them persist, especially between librarians and other professional staff, it could easily lead to

conflicts that will make the work of the organization difficult. Librarians have, in the past, always run academic libraries. The change in the balance of staff will change this at least to some degree and could require a reworking of the way academic libraries are managed. The change is likely to have an impact on the identity of librarians.

Who Does Library Work?

Another way to view this issue is to ask this question: Who does library work?

One can distinguish between what librarians with MLS degrees do and "library work." It is the work that is important; not who does it. But it is, of course, not that simple. Academic librarians and our professional associations have long held that being a librarian means having an MLS degree, and while not always expressed, the clear implication is that it is librarians who do library work. ACRL is crystal clear on this. The association's "Statement on the Terminal Professional Degree for Academic Librarians" says simply, "The master's degree in library science from a library school program accredited by the American Library Association is the appropriate terminal professional degree for academic librarians."⁴² Typical of the general sentiment of academic librarians is the title of John Berry's article on a Council on Library and Information Resources program to move PhD holders into research library librarian positions through a fellowship rather than an MLS degree program. Berry's title is "But Don't Call 'em Librarians."⁴³

In *War Made New*, Max Boot discusses the challenges military organizations face in confronting change. He says, "Successful adaptation to major technological shifts requires overcoming that dread [of innovation] and changing the kinds of people who are rewarded within a military structure."⁴⁴ Boot recounts how 19th-century navies did not treat "line" and "engineering" officers comparably until more than 50 years after the introduction of steam power. Logistics officers in 19th- and early 20th-century armies faced similar inequities. Boot wonders how the Air Force will treat the controllers who fly drones from trailers thousands of miles from the combat zone. Will this time be counted as "flying" hours? He continues: "This is part of a broader challenge confronting all Information Age militaries: how to make room for those who fight with a computer mouse, not an M-16."⁴⁵ I would suggest

that academic libraries face a similar challenge. We will need to begin rewarding different kinds of staff, many without MLS degrees. In many cases, staff with positions that have received the highest status in the past, primarily librarians, will not appreciate the change.

The MLS and Faculty Status

Academic libraries have a long history of class distinction within their workforces. Librarians, often with some form of faculty status, and clerical staff have long had clearly differentiated roles, benefits, and responsibilities. The addition of technical staff and other professionals, such as personnel and development officers, in recent decades has added a third class to the library mix. It is likely that the skill sets required for library work will increasingly not be found in generalist MLS librarians, but that subject expertise and knowledge of technical areas like geographic information systems, instructional design, or assessment will be better provided by individuals with master's or PhD training in these areas. These individuals will be doing library work, but in many cases they will be classed as professionals with technologists, rather than with librarians.

James Neal has recently suggested that influx of other professionals is already in full force and that it is a good thing.⁴⁶ He argues that librarianship has long struggled with how it can define itself as a profession. He goes on, "This ambiguity about the professional characteristics of librarianship suggests that educational preparation for the field does not have an impact on socialization into the field comparable to other professions."⁴⁷ Neal argues that staff trained in other disciplines—"raised by wolves" as he puts it—might provide a creative infusion of needed talent. He concludes: "They [non-MLS professionals] may fit effectively or be creatively disruptive in the transformed libraries we are seeking to create. Either way, they are needed for their important contributions to academic library innovation and mutability. They will grow in their influence and relevance to the future academic library."⁴⁸

Among the findings of Thea Lindquist and Todd Gilman's study of academic librarians with subject doctorates was that a sizeable minority of academic librarians with subject doctorates did not have MLS degrees and that younger academic librarians with subject doctorates

were significantly less likely to have also an MLS than their older colleagues.⁴⁹ Lindquist and Gilman conclude:

The fact that so many respondents lack the MLS but are, nonetheless, employed as professional librarians indicates that a significant number of academic/research library employers do not insist upon an MLS if the potential employee has a subject doctorate. It also effectively reinforces a widely held (if minority) view that, in certain situations, a subject doctorate offers many of the essentials that an MLS provides while also assuring that the candidate has deep subject knowledge in a particular field, advanced knowledge of the research process, or both.⁵⁰

These findings demonstrate that, despite the strong sentiment among librarians and their professional organization for the MLS as the required terminal degree, academic libraries will forgo this requirement when subject expertise is required and can be acquired through the recruitment of individuals who hold the subject doctorates but do not hold the MLS degree.

It is likely that a small minority of PhD holders without MLS degrees in subject specialist positions will be acceptable, but this is not what Neal is talking about. A large number of non-MLS professionals doing library work with masters' degrees in geographic information systems, instructional design, informatics, or new media will be something else. This will clearly challenge long-established ways of thinking about what an academic librarian is and should be, and maybe more important, who should do library work. We can expect considerable resistance to the changing of established norms.

There have been many debates and some research on the impact of faculty or academic status on the work of academic librarians. It is generally concluded that faculty status provides librarians with better job security and better pay and that librarians with faculty status are more engaged with campus governance.⁵¹ Despite this, some research seems to argue that faculty status does not correlate with the quality of the institution.⁵² Rachel Applegate, in a review of the research on faculty status, found no evidence for the claims made by its proponents.⁵³ That

classic naysayer, Blaise Cronin, blasted faculty status for librarians in his 2001 *Library Journal* article, "The Mother of All Myths," which he concluded by saying:

If anything, the obsession with faculty status merely detracts from customer service and weakens the profession's public image. Librarians, along with information systems specialists and sundry other members of the campus community, are professional employees whose role is to support, not define or negotiate, the academic mission of the university. Fifty years of conceit is probably enough.⁵⁴

The response of the library academic library community was quick, and Cronin was soundly taken to task.⁵⁵

What is important for our discussion is not the merits of faculty status for librarians, but rather, since it is firmly entrenched in many institutions, its implications for organizational change in academic libraries. It is my view that to the extent that faculty status increases the class distinctions between librarians and other professionals who do library work, it is likely to create tensions and to limit the flexibility in the use of staff. On the other hand, especially on larger campuses, faculty status often enhances the relationships between librarians and faculty, and this could be a compensating advantage. As Charles B. Lowry put it 15 years ago: "If closer affinity with classroom teaching and with research are logical outcomes of the new paradigm, then the case for faculty status during the next twenty years will be a persuasive one."⁵⁶

Faculty status, while it has, in my view, many advantages, may exacerbate library's ability to blend staff with and without MLS degrees; it could be a significant impediment to the construction of productive working relationships and organizational structures.

Merged Organizations as a Model

One way to look at the likely future of academic libraries is to look at the experience of those colleges and universities that have chosen to merge their libraries and computer centers. John K. Stemmer reviewed such organizations, sometimes called a "merged information services organization" or MISO, in liberal arts colleges and provides an effective

summary of the justifications for this organizational change. He documents a slow but steady growth of this organizational structure and cites four reasons for pursuing it:

- improved service to faculty and students through better technology and information support and through the effective implementation of new technology
- increased efficiencies and greater organizational flexibility with budget and staff
- improved visibility and enhanced reputation for the campus
- the evolution of a new "information profession" that will encourage and support campus technical leadership and increased staff cooperation⁵⁷

Stemmer found, "The MISO model is an effective organizational structure with which to deliver information resources and services on a liberal arts campus. Both academic deans and CIOs had favorable impressions and perceived the MISO organization as effective."⁵⁸ However, he identified a number concerns: a champion for the merger is required, the merging of the cultures of computing and library organizations takes time and requires a significant staff development program, and at times there is a loss of focus among constituent elements of the MISO.

Peggy Seiden and Michael D. Kathman reviewed the history of merged organizations and found that the mergers were generally driven from the top down and that, in general, while there were some examples of merged help/reference desks: "Even those that have 'merged' basically have two separate units that report to the same individual."⁵⁹

Mary K. Bolin examines the organizational structures of land grant universities and finds that very few have adopted a merged model. She concludes by observing, "The library has synergy with everyone, and, in a different way, so does the computer center. While organizationally imposed synergy may have worked for some institutions, it may be that the library and computer center can find 'synergy,' 'convergence,' and so on, by remaining organizationally distinct, preserving the strengths of each."⁶⁰ Edward D. Garten and Delmus E. Williams concur when, after reviewing the cultural difference of libraries and computing organizations, they say, "Those who manage academic libraries and those who manage computer centers cohabit a common information

universe. But cohabitation is just that—cohabitation—not marriage.⁶¹ Deborah Ludwig and Jeffrey Bullington studied the merged organization at the University of Kansas and conclude that they see promise in the organization's current "adolescence." They suggest that for the structure to achieve its promise, librarians must learn to work alongside technologists and not feel that it "lessens their status on the faculty playing field" and has not "eroded traditional library roles and the benefits those roles provide library users."⁶²

What we should take from the experience of merged libraries and computing organizations is not that doing it or not doing it is right or wrong, but rather that it cannot be accomplished without considerable difficulties, and that a truly harmonized and integrated organization is the rare exception. It may be the same as the number of non-MLS professionals increases inside academic libraries. The same cultural differences will be present and, because the change is happening inside the library, the threat to library values may seem more dangerous—more like a cancer than an external assault.

Financial Implications

There are several ways in which the trends I have identified might impact that financial situation of academic libraries.

First, the decline in the number of clerical and student staff will provide some opportunities for salary savings, though it is unlikely that these savings will be enough to offset fully the requirements for new professional staff.

Second, salaries for professional staff will increase, probably at rates greater than the cost of living. While it may not feel like it for most librarians, at least as measured by the ARL Salary Survey, academic librarians in the United States have had salary increases that are greater than the increase in the Consumer Price Index over the past 20 years.⁶³ In recent years, this growth may not have been distributed equally, as Martha Kyrillidou and Mark Young point out in their introduction to the most recent *ARL Annual Salary Survey*: "Libraries need staff with high-level technical skills to operate the more sophisticated and complex information environments that are in place. As people are hired with higher beginning salaries, the inability to adjust the overall salary structure to achieve some equity for the experienced staff members is

another factor that contributes to slow salary growth for higher salaries."⁶⁴ It is likely that the need for more specialized positions, whether librarians or non-MLS professionals fill them, will continue to drive this trend. It is also likely to be the case that the most desirable new MLS graduates will command higher salaries. The salary compression that is likely to result will exacerbate the generational and librarian/specialist tensions we have already noted.

I have suggested that libraries over the next decade will need to move a significant portion of the resources devoted to collections from purchasing published material to curating content that either is produced at or is important to the campus.⁶⁵ To the extent that this can be done, it will provide funding for the new positions that will be devoted to this task. While I believe this is the appropriate course for libraries, it will be a difficult one, as the press of cost increase for scientific journals will continue and, while it is reasonable to have faith in the long-term success of open access, the transition to it will be difficult, and carving funds for staffing from funds currently devoted to the purchase of science journals will be a difficult political challenge.

Conclusion: Getting from Here to There

It is quite clear that staffing academic libraries for the transitions they face will be challenging. As organizations, academic libraries will need the ability to be flexible with their staffing, but our traditional structures and long-term commitment to individuals will make this difficult. The aging of academic librarians will at some point lead to a large number of retirements and will result in openings, but this will not come soon enough in many cases. The aging of MLS graduates and their increasing recruitment from traditional library settings will make the MLS a less effective filter for the hiring of library professionals, but it is likely that moving away from this standard, though it might, as Neal has argued, make good sense, will be difficult and will likely create tension between older librarians and younger non-MLS professionals. The distinct class structure that is imposed on libraries where librarians have faculty status will likely limit needed flexibility.

We will need to reduce the number of clerical and student staff, and though this may well be an accomplished through attrition, it will understandably create anxiety within this group.

There will be a particular challenge in recruiting professionals into leadership roles. In part this will be because Gen Xers are less inclined than Boomers to make the sacrifices necessary, but probably of more importance is the fact that there will be fewer leadership opportunities for the next generation until they are much older than was the case for the current generation of library leaders.

I believe there are several things that can be done to help academic libraries get from where they are now to where they need to go:

- It is critical that the library's leadership be frank and realistic and make the realities clear to current staff. Everyone understands that our world is changing quickly, but if we sugarcoat how these changes will impact our staffs, this can only lead to surprises for them later. This is not what we want.
- Money will need to be found to pay both librarians and non-MLS professionals competitive salaries.
- We need to be generous with support for staff development. When a staff member from any part of the organization is interested in acquiring new skills that could benefit the library, encouragement and support should be provided.
- It will be important for the current generation of librarians, especially those in leadership positions, to recognize that individuals coming into libraries today may not see their lives and their careers in the same way the Boomer generation did 20 or 30 years ago. Accommodations need to be made for different work/life balances and to provide meaningful work early in careers.
- Every library should have a clearly articulated strategy for managing its recruitment, retention, and leadership development. At a minimum, every director should know the demographics of his or her staff and when retirements can be expected. Retirements will be critical opportunities, and they should be used strategically.
- It is inevitable that academic libraries will be looking for new staff with a wide range of skills. Libraries need to be clear about how they will fill these positions. Several questions are particularly important. First, when do they need librarians, and when are non-MLS professionals a better alternative?

Second, what is the salary strategy? Will they pay the salary needed to attract the required talent even when this leads to salary compression or inequity? There are many possible answers to these questions. What is important is not answering them on the fly.

- It seems to me that it will be very difficult to avoid a growing tensions between librarians and non-MLS professionals. There are any number of strategies for minimizing these, including teams and other types of collaborative projects that expose different staff to the skills and abilities of the other group. The opposite approach would be to create separate parts of the organization—a “skunk works”—and live with the animosity that will follow.

The next decade will be challenging for academic libraries from a variety of perspectives. Finding, retaining, and developing the staffs we need will be one of the central challenges. If we recognize this and confront it, I think those libraries that are doing exciting things, where good work is recognized and rewarded and where the culture is not cut-throat or overly political, can be successful.

Notes

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