

RECRUITMENT TO THE PROFESSION : STUDENT WORKERS IN ACADEMIC
LIBRARIES AS POTENTIAL FUTURE LIBRARIANS

by
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Despite the educative, mentoring, and recruitment opportunities that abound in the librarian-student worker relationship, academic libraries are not taking a conscious, active role in what could be a powerful catalyst in ensuring the existence and success of the next generation of librarians. Thus, the current study explored this recruitment potential by surveying a population of undergraduate student workers to determine their knowledge about and interest in the profession.

Library and non-library related factors both influenced the decision to seek library work. One student specifically wanted to learn about librarianship. Participants were generally correct in their identification of the librarians and their responsibilities, but often answers were vague and incomplete. Work experience was viewed as either positive or neutral. Significant interest was shown in possible educative and mentoring activities. The results of this study provide support for greater emphasis on recruitment focused on undergraduate student library workers.

Headings:

College and university libraries

Librarians -- Supply and demand

Recruiting for librarianship

Student assistants -- College and university libraries

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INTRODUCTION

An inquiry of a librarian asking how he or she decided to enter the profession often elicits a smile, a deep breath, and after a reflective pause, a reply to the effect of “Well ... it’s a kind of a long story.” This story might include: descriptions of a job taken out of college that was unrelated to an earned bachelor’s degree, a succession of unrewarding career paths, a teaching career that resulted in burn-out, or the pursuit of advanced degrees that ultimately led to an unclear professional path. A common conclusion to this long-winded explanation might be “...and then I realized I’d always loved libraries, reading, information, and helping people...so I decided to get my master’s in library science...”

Library literature has described this arrival-at-the-profession phenomenon as “the result of happenstance, a surprise to themselves and their families” (Sullivan 108). Susan Martin asks an essential question, “How many librarians do you know who are in the field because they always wanted to be a librarian, because they discovered it in high school or college and that thrilled them so much that they decided to apply for admission to a master’s program in library science right after receiving their baccalaureate degree?” (198).

While taking the opportunity to explore various professions and realms of academia can be a rewarding and enlightening experience that can facilitate the contribution of diverse perspectives to the field, we must ultimately consider the implications of this delayed entry. Aside from producing

feelings of confusion, discontent and frustration in the career-seeker, this indirect route essentially squanders valuable time in a person's life – years or even decades – that could have been spent pursuing library education, research, and professional development, not to mention practice in a rewarding career.

Looking beyond individual consequences of this circulative pathway, ramifications to the profession as a whole need to be addressed. As evidenced by library literature in recent decades, both empirical and anecdotal observations confirm that the population of librarians is rapidly aging, and is often referred to using such terms as “endangered species” and “the graying of librarianship” (Harralson 52). Naturally this problem, which is due in large part to age at entry to the profession, has inspired new directions and discussion focused on the recruitment of younger people to librarianship.

A viable, logical solution has been proposed by various librarian-authors to circumvent the typical path to discovery. The potential recruitment of a specific, qualified and interested population of undergraduates – student workers in academic libraries – has been suggested as a remedy to the recruitment crisis our libraries may be facing in the coming years. Likelihood of their candidacy for active mentoring is based on the nature of student workers' roles and learning experiences while employed by the library. At the outset, a student *chooses* to apply for a job at the library; while financial necessity may provoke this decision, the student ultimately makes a conscious choice to work in the *library*. For many students, library employment extends beyond the first year to be a part-time job for the duration of their college experience; thus their developed skills, knowledge of the library culture, and perspective of librarianship has the potential to impact career decisions upon graduation and thereafter.

Despite the educative, mentoring, and recruitment opportunities that abound in this working relationship, academic libraries and librarians are not taking a conscious, active role in what could be a powerful catalyst in ensuring the existence and success of the next generation of librarians. Thus, the current study intends to explore this potential by surveying a population of student workers at an academic library to determine if they are good candidates for recruitment to the profession; and if so, how librarians and staff can best encourage consideration of this career path through education, communication and mentoring.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The aging population of librarians

According to a 1999 report by Stanley Wilder, based on data from the Current Population Survey (CPL) and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Annual Salary Survey, the population of ARL librarians is rapidly aging. Wilder links the aging trends to those of national demographics, and identifies the baby boom (1946-1964) and its effects on population and higher education as major factors contributing to the aging of the academic librarian population (5). Wilder cites “Library Manpower,” a 1970 landmark study of librarianship by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, noting that the only two professional groups older than librarians were physicians and dentists. Further, he states that while the average age of librarians did not rise between the years of 1970 and 1990, it increased rapidly between 1990 and 1994 (11). Wilder’s projections suggest, “the aging of the ARL population will continue through 2010, when librarians aged 50 and over should comprise 58 percent of the ARL population” (34). In terms of exit rates, between the years of 2000 and 2020, a significant 67 percent of the ARL population will be retiring (35).

While the focus of much library literature has been placed on aging, retirement trends and consequent implications, a significant proportion of essays and articles have mentioned the lack of young people entering the profession. Rebecca Banfield cites Heim and Moen’s research, emphasizing how few young people are choosing a career of librarianship. Their study found that almost 73 percent of library school students were over the age of 30, with only 7.1 percent between 20 and 24 years old (292). Banfield states, “What is to be in store for libraries in the

next century depends on the recruitment of more, and younger librarians in this decade” (292).

Wilder’s study also noted that there is an under-representation of librarians aged 35 and under. A key factor he attributes to this void is the age at entry to the profession, stating “it is clear that age at entry is one important difference between the demographics of librarians and that of comparable professionals” (23).

Typical career path to librarianship

“The [...] (ALISE) data on the age of students enrolled in ALA-accredited MLS programs document what most librarians already know in an anecdotal sense: For many, librarianship is a second career, entered in mid-life” (Wilder 23). Martin terms librarianship “the accidental profession” in her 1995 article, based on the fact that it is “populated overwhelmingly by people who discovered it while detouring from some other planned career” (198). Tami Echavarria concurs, observing that “many MLS graduates are people who are changing careers, returning to graduate school after a hiatus from school, or support staff who have worked in libraries and who wish to become degreed librarians” (20).

A 1988 study by Pearson and Webb examined the educational and occupational circumstances that led library students to choose their profession. Based on a survey completed by 1,547 students from 47 library schools, only nine percent had decided on librarianship prior to entering college, while another 20 percent decided during their undergraduate years. Findings also showed that 70 percent of the students had worked full-time in other fields, while 60 percent made an outright career change. Top reasons for entering the profession were the nature of libraries, public service and the love of books (134). While this study was slanted toward assessing the technical

readiness of the graduating library students due to their lack of educational background in the sciences, the data demonstrates the typical career path trends, and a lack of interest in the profession from young people.

Another study in 1985 by Barbara Dewey examined the selection of librarianship as a career. A total of 271 questionnaires were completed from students at Indiana University's School of Library and Information Science during three fall semesters from 1981-1983. While the study sought to "reaffirm the notion of librarians' influence as a primary factor in a student's choice of librarianship as a career and the implications of the general image in librarianship as it relates to career choice" (16), the author of the present study believes the findings and discussion failed to address these issues. Instead, they focused on the selection of Indiana University as opposed to other library schools.

Heim and Moen published a large study in 1989 sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) that surveyed library and information science students' attitudes, demographics and aspirations. Of interest to the current study are statistics related to age of library school students, as previously mentioned, and factors relating to the choice of librarianship as a profession as well as when this decision occurs. Only 16.6% of the participants surveyed were shown to have made the decision to pursue librarianship before graduating from college. "LISSADA Survey respondents demonstrated that highest ranked decision points were *after* formal education was completed" (44).

Recruitment strategies focused on undergraduates

Mark Winston in his 1998 article discusses recruitment theory and its implications within the library profession. He cites the literature of Heim and Moen, among others, in his compilation of factors that influence the decision to enter the profession. Relevant to the current study are such factors as: information provided by role models, positions held as student library assistants that motivated them, appreciation for the work in which librarians are engaged, enjoyment of the library environment, interest in a service career and image of the profession (242). While Winston concludes that this information should inform our recruitment strategies related specifically to diversity initiatives, the author of the present study believes it should also be used in terms of recruiting undergraduate students, in an initiative to recruit young people to librarianship.

Much of the recruitment literature names librarians as holding ultimate responsibility for recruitment of new successors. Heim and Moen's findings emphasize the appropriateness of this argument as they found that at least 35.9% of the participants attributed their pursuit of this career to the efforts of other librarians "thus we see that the influence of librarians is considerable" (50). Martin encapsulates the sentiments of many librarian authors when she states, "We absolutely must ensure that we attract to the profession younger people of the highest possible caliber. We know that the college graduates at the top of their classes are going to law school, medical school [...] there is no reason why librarianship can not attempt to compete more successfully to attract more of these exceptional people" (199).

Former ALA president John Berry pointed to librarians as holding the responsibility for recruiting in 1999, stating that "study after study has shown that the most effective recruiters in librarianship

have been working librarians” (6) and later called for action in a 2002 editorial, urging each librarian to be an ambassador for the profession, recruiting at least two people a year (7). ALA hosts a Human Resource Development and Recruitment web resource at www.ala.org/hrdr to educate visitors about librarianship and to disseminate marketing strategies and materials to those interested in becoming librarians or encouraging this career path to others. While this marketing tool is a highly educational and encouraging resource, there is no clear focus on reaching or directly targeting undergraduate students seeking a career in librarianship.

Echavarria, agreeing that the “torch must be passed to a younger generation of librarians” notes that such an impersonal ad campaign might seem appropriate, but that “this approach may not be sufficient without plenty of follow-up to encourage the initially curious to pursue the prerequisite education to enter the field” (18). She advocates reaching out to a population that is interested and willing to listen, namely that of undergraduate students, reiterating, “we are our own best recruiters” (20).

The lack of knowledge about the nature of the profession has been blamed for the low level of interest in librarianship among college students. Martin feels that academic librarians are not succeeding in their recruiting efforts, despite the fact that they “have contact with college students, by supervising, by teaching bibliographic instruction, or by serving them at the reference desk, [and] they have not excelled at showing young people that the seeking and providing of information is exhilarating, as well as offering many rewarding professional opportunities” (198).

Patricia Glass Schuman echoes this statement, specifically noting that actions of academic librarians do not fulfill the charges addressed in library literature. She partially projects librarians’

failures to the entire academic community, including teaching faculty, claiming that its “lack of awareness extends to the undergraduate student” and in turn “we lose the pool of talent from which we hope to recruit future librarians” (87). Sandra Jenkins, in her study of undergraduate perceptions of reference librarians and collections, found the results of her survey “suggest that many students do not have a clear perception of the purpose of the reference collection or the reference librarian” (239). Evidently, education about the role of librarians in the academic community needs to be addressed with faculty and students alike.

Student workers as the missing puzzle piece

Given the abundance of literature that points to the need for young people to enter the profession and the dearth of successful recruiting strategies that target this population, it seems logical to focus efforts on educating undergraduate students about librarianship as a career. While large scale, campus-wide marketing and mentoring initiatives are likely to be unfeasible, targeted efforts aimed at particularly receptive populations may be appropriate. One obvious population is that of student workers in the academic library.

Donald Kenney and Frances Painter explain, “[...] student employees have an opportunity to see the challenges and the rewards of academic librarianship and so may choose to pursue graduate study in library and information science. Student work has been the initial experience in many satisfying and rewarding careers” (45). Olmanns agrees that students’ “future career choices are influenced by their work experiences in college. Many libraries have been instrumental in recruiting student employees to the profession [...]” (75). Indeed, there is much reference to the

viability of student workers as ideal potential candidates for recruitment to librarianship (Banfield 293; Clark 90-1; Echavarria 20; Martin 198-9; White 94).

Several factors lead to the assignment of student workers as a population of likely future librarians. First and foremost, regardless of the purpose for securing a job, a student consciously chooses to apply for a job in the library. During their time of employment, students will become familiar with the library staff and their responsibilities, the work environment, the library's organization system, and the services the library provides. Students typically shelve books, work at the circulation desk, and process materials; but increasingly, students are being utilized to provide higher level services such as reference assistance, technical projects, library tours, and creation of written instructional materials (Kenney and Painter 36). According to Clark, today "student workers do far more than check out and shelve books. They program, design, and provide vital support to technical services, public service, and administrative staff" (87-8). Oltmanns adds, "They acquire skills that will give them an advantage in the job market because of their knowledge of information resources and information management systems. They develop skills that will help them adjust to and function in a new technological age" (74). Clearly, the population of student workers in academic libraries appears to be a rich, untapped source of likely and highly qualified future librarians.

While the library literature discusses these theories at length, there has been no empirical research examining perspectives of student workers and how they view their library work experiences and their future career paths. Thus, the current study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Does the decision to work in an academic library make students apt to consider librarianship as a profession?
2. What is the nature of student workers' knowledge and perceptions of the role of librarians as professionals?
3. Does the experience of working in an academic library as a student encourage pursuit of a career in librarianship?
4. Would student workers be interested in learning more about librarianship if education and mentoring were offered by librarians?

METHOD

The current study aimed to explore these research questions by focusing on the population of student workers at Lilly Library, a branch library at Duke University. Duke is a private research university, established in 1924, and located in Durham, NC. Total student enrollment in 2003 was 11,602, with 6,146 students at the undergraduate level. There are a dozen libraries on Duke's campus, and Lilly is a part of the main Perkins Library system. Lilly holds the film and video, fine and dramatic arts, dance, philosophy, sports and general reference collections, and is located on East (first-year residence) Campus.

At the time of this study (Spring 2003) Lilly employed 22 student workers, 19 of which had undergraduate status. The decision was made to exclude the three graduate level student workers because they exhibited little interest in pursuing a career in librarianship; they held non-library subject specific degrees, had definite career aspirations, and taught undergraduate courses at Duke in their field of scholarship. Since the current study was focused on the recruitment of undergraduate students to the profession, the 19 undergraduate student workers in the population were invited to participate in the study.

A survey was created, based on the author's research questions, to determine the student workers' reasons for seeking a library job, understanding of the field of librarianship, and interest in the profession. The survey (Appendix A) consists of nine questions in the format of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank and short answer. Students were asked to note their year in school, how many semesters they had worked at Lilly thus far, and their reasons for application of employment at Lilly. Further, they were asked to demonstrate their knowledge of who the librarians at Lilly were,

and the nature of their professional responsibilities. Lastly, they were to indicate whether or not they would consider librarianship as a career and why; how their experience at Lilly has influenced this decision; and whether or not they would be interested in various education, orientation, and mentoring activities provided by librarians. Surveys, along with consent letters, were placed in all 19 students' mailboxes in the Lilly staff workroom. The students were given two weeks to return the completed surveys to the author's mailbox in the same room. Three reminder emails were sent to the group, encouraging prompt responses.

Since human subjects were to be involved in this study, approval was requested by the Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board (AA-IRB) at UNC Chapel Hill. The letter of consent (Appendix B), survey instrument, and appropriate forms were submitted and approved by the researcher's faculty advisor, local review committee, department dean and the AA-IRB chair, provided minor language changes were made. Anonymity was ensured, as participants' names were not used on the surveys. To emphasize confidentiality, participants were told that individual responses would not be shared with the staff at Lilly. Aggregation was guaranteed, and the students were informed they could withdraw from the study at any time. The surveys were coded to facilitate follow-up communication between the researcher and the participants.

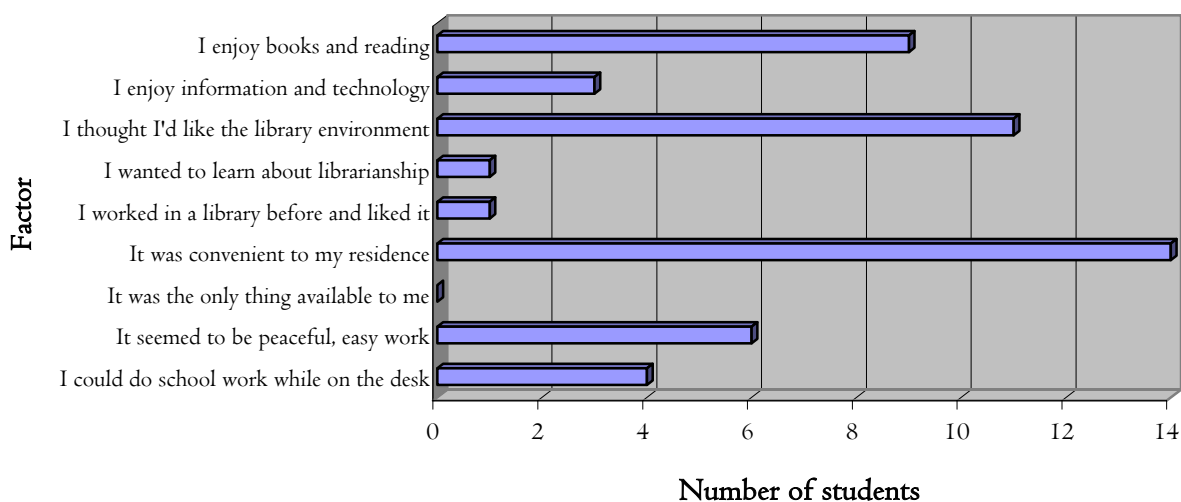
ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Of the 19 student workers at Lilly Library who were invited to participate in the study, 15 responded by returning completed surveys; thus the rate of participation was 79%. The age distribution was as follows: nine freshmen, four sophomores, no juniors, and two seniors. The number of semesters the students had worked (including spring 2003) at Lilly followed a similar distribution: nine students had worked two semesters; four had worked four; one had worked six; and one had worked seven semesters. The fact that the majority of the students were freshman is logical, since Lilly Library is located on East Campus, where the first year residence dorms are.

Does the decision to work in an academic library make students apt to consider librarianship?

Following is a visual representation of the factors that led students to seek a job at Lilly:

Figure I: Factors influencing decision to work at Lilly



Students were asked to indicate all factors, library and non-library related, that influenced the decision to apply for a job at Lilly in order to determine likelihood of their interest in librarianship. In addition to the results displayed in the preceding chart, other written responses included: “I could learn how to use the library and its resources,” “my father worked in a library when he was in college,” and “knew others working here.”

Among the factors that did not correlate positively to the nature of libraries or library work were those of building location, perceived ease of the tasks, and expected “down time” on the job. 93% of the students noted Lilly’s proximity to their places of residence as a contributing factor, which was expected. The perceived undemanding nature of the work they would be doing was a moderate factor that affected the decision of an average of 47% of the student workers. Notably, not one of the students indicated that a job at Lilly was the only option available to him or her. This finding strongly reinforces the notion that the students actively chose to seek employment at the library.

The remaining factors, which addressed personal interest in the library environment and library materials and resources; previous enjoyable library employment experiences; and interest in librarianship were to be more indicative of students’ suitability and potential interest in the profession. Promisingly, 73% of the students thought they would like the library environment; 60% cited their enjoyment of books and reading; and 20% cited their enjoyment of information and technology. Previous library employment factors proved encouraging; one student had worked in a library before and liked it and another student’s father had worked in a library when he was in college. Perhaps most importantly, one student chose to work at Lilly to learn more about librarianship, while another wished to learn how use the library and its resources. Interestingly

enough, each of the last four single responses discussed were factors named by four different students.

While these findings demonstrate that the decision to work in an academic library was made based on a variety of factors, the noted library related factors (interest or enjoyment of environment, library materials, prior library experiences and nature of librarianship) were almost as important as the non-library, logistical factors (location, ease of tasks, availability of jobs). Including the “other” comments, library related factors received 27 marks, while non-library related factors received 30 marks. The one person who noted that he or she chose this job to learn more about librarianship has a significant impact on the answer to this research question. While this student only represented one of the student workers in this population, it is important to recognize that students like this do exist, and to ignore opportunities to educate and recruit similar students would be a disservice to both the students themselves and the library profession.

In terms of the aptness of student workers in libraries to consider a career in librarianship, it is difficult to say how their personal and professional interests differ from those of non-student workers at Duke. Perhaps this comparison could be a subject for further research. However, based on the results of this study, the responses indicated that library related character traits were present in a significant number of the student workers.

What is the nature of student workers’ knowledge and perceptions of the role of librarians?

To determine student workers’ perceptions of librarians and their professional roles, the participants were asked three questions with relation to this issue. They were instructed to not

consult outside resources, simply to answer based on their current understanding. The questions addressed the educational requirements of librarians, daily professional responsibilities, and the ability to identify who the librarians were at Lilly. The degree to which the participants answered the questions correctly would reveal not only whether appropriate orientation and education would be in order, but would also indicate whether the students were sufficiently informed about librarianship to decide if it was a career possibility for them.

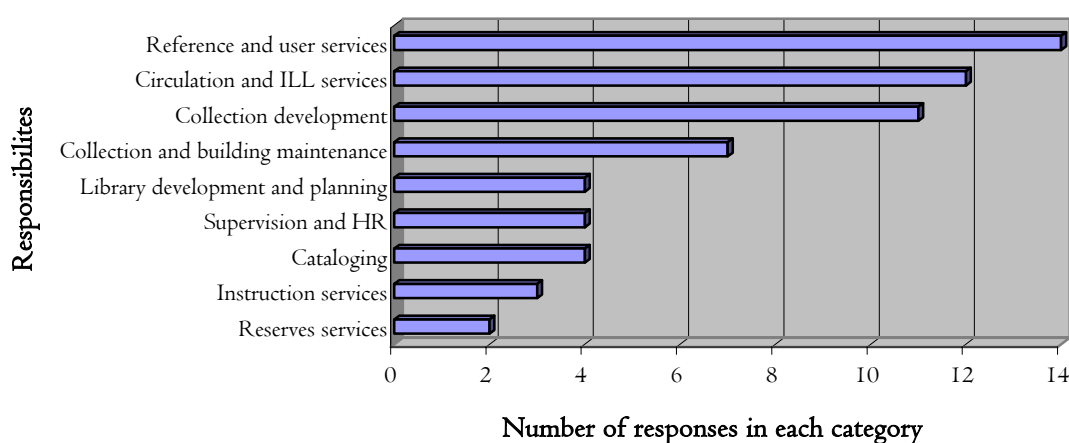
Participants were first asked to identify the educational level required to be a librarian. Given the choices of undergraduate, graduate, PhD, and not sure, the answers were surprisingly accurate. 73% correctly answered that a graduate degree was required. 13% thought that an undergraduate degree was sufficient, while another 13% were not sure. No one believed that a PhD was required. While these figures are encouraging in many senses, it should be noted that in the consent letter to the participants, the researcher did reveal that she was doing this study for her Master's Paper requirement of her pursued graduate degree in library science; and this might have influenced responses.

The next question asked participants to identify who, of all the staff members at Lilly, were the librarians. The first names of all 14 employees were listed, and students were told to circle the names of those they thought were librarians. This information was sought to determine student workers' perceptions of what librarians' professional roles are, as well as their ability to distinguish between the responsibilities of professional and para-professional staff members. Five of the fifteen employees at Lilly were librarians. Participants correctly identified these five librarians 89% of the time. The head of the library was correctly identified as a librarian 100% of the time. However, non-librarians were identified as librarians 42% of the time. The staff members who

were most often misidentified as librarians were people with whom the students had a lot of daily contact, due to their prominent roles in circulation, reserves and student supervision.

The last question in this section asked students to list the professional roles of librarians, or what they do every day, in their own words. The 61 total responsibilities were gathered and divided into nine categories by the researcher. The breakdown was as follows:

Figure 2: Perceived responsibilities of librarians



While each listed responsibility was placed into one of these nine categories, it is important to note that the language used by the students was not official library terminology, but was informal and often vague. The categorized responses to this question are included in Appendix C. For example, included within the category of reference and user services were accurate statements like “help patrons with research” and “answer reference questions” along with fuzzy statements like “Umm...helping patrons” and “interact with patrons.” Similarly, in the category of collection development were clear responses like “determine acquisition of new books” along with unclear

responses like “update library’s collection” and “looking for new stuff to order.” Noticeably, there were student workers who had a better understanding or could more effectively articulate the precise nature of librarians’ responsibilities than others.

Of the responses given, approximately 60% of the time participants were accurate in their assessments of what librarians are typically responsible for. The abundance of references related to circulation services, which, while inaccurate at some academic libraries, are accurate at Lilly Library due to its combined reference and circulation desk. However, two students said that librarians “shelve new books and reshelve old books” and “maintain circulation records” which is untrue, but frequently held misconception. Responsibilities that are not those of librarians at Lilly include collection and building maintenance and repair, hiring and supervision of student workers, and reserves services; these inaccurate statements account for 21% of the total responses. All the librarians at Lilly do bibliographic instruction, yet only three participants mentioned this as a responsibility.

The student workers appeared to have a grasp of the basic reference, circulation and collection development responsibilities that librarians have; however, the responses indicated a lack of knowledge about several roles that the students are not exposed to in their work experience. Vastly under-represented or absent from the participants’ descriptions were references to development of web-based research tools, collaboration with faculty and university administration, attendance of professional development conferences and workshops, budgeting, virtual and email reference, and scholarly research and authorship. If complete knowledge of librarians’ professional roles is a contributing factor to possible interest in the profession, which it certainly should be, the student workers in this study may be disadvantaged in this respect.

Does a student's experience of working in an academic library encourage pursuit of librarianship?

Participants were asked if they would consider librarianship as a career (Yes, No or Maybe). Two students answered "Yes" and one student answered "Maybe." The remaining 12 students answered "No." When given the option to explain their answers, it was concluded that five of the fifteen participants had positive things to say, for example "I think devoted people are needed in large library systems to provide information for a diverse group of people," "I think it is a job that fits my personality and I have liked most of the people that I have worked with so far," and "I love the library's environment [...] books, academics, and helping people learn." Of the other ten participants, six choose not to explain their answers, two indicated other career paths that they were set on, and sadly, two referred to the lack of intellectual stimulation involved in librarianship. If some of the invisible aspects of the librarians' jobs such as collaboration with faculty and development of web-based research tools, for example, were made visible to these students, they might see more of the intellectual qualities of the work.

Next, student workers were asked how their experience at Lilly has influenced their answers in the previous question. Eight indicated that the experience has had no influence. One person thankfully realized, "I don't have the patience to deal with people the way [they] do every day." The five students who had positively written about considering librarianship as a career in the previous question had similar, encouraging responses, such as "I've met intellectual, professional librarians who really enjoy contributing to the academic community," "It has given me first hand experience with library work and librarians, and motivated me to look into the benefits of a career," and "I have a greater appreciation for librarians." Importantly, one student worker replied

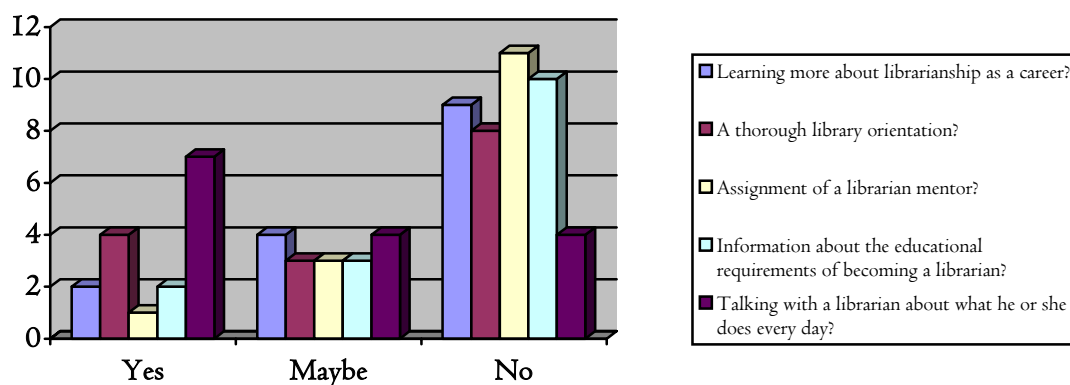
“ [...] no one on the staff looks unhappy, but since I just don’t know what they do, I can’t really say I want to be a librarian.” There is obviously plenty of room for education about the challenging and rewarding nature of librarianship in this population, and it is encouraging to know that 40% of these student workers have cited their work experience at Lilly to be positive and potentially meaningful in terms of their career choice.

Would student workers be interested in learning more about librarianship if education and mentoring were offered by librarians?

The last set of questions asked participants if they would be interested in any of five education and mentoring activities if they were offered at Lilly. The students were to circle “Yes, No or Maybe.”

The results follow:

Figure 3: Interest in education and mentoring



The responses from this set of questions were more positive than anticipated. Every question yielded at least 25% positive interest in the proposed activity. Seven student workers wanted to talk to a librarian about what he or she does everyday, and four more might be interested if this

were an option. Between four and seven students would be interested in a thorough library tour, and between two and five students wanted to learn the educational requirements of becoming a librarian. One student definitely wanted to be assigned a librarian mentor, and three more might want to do the same. Lastly, between two and four students wanted to learn more about librarianship as a career. The data indicates that additional education, orientation and mentoring would be welcomed in a significant 41% of the student worker population.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study are encouraging in some aspects, but also indicative of noticeable gaps in others. Discussion, conclusions and recommendations follow with relation to the essential and beneficial nature of education and mentoring student workers in the library, along with strategies for implementation and positive side effects that can result from these added activities and efforts.

Focusing on the recruitment of undergraduates

Undergraduate students are by nature a receptive and malleable population. It is during their first year(s) of college that students decide what to major in by exploring courses in various fields, talking to professors and peers, consulting advisors, and realizing their interests. This exploratory disposition invites discussion, consultation, navigation, mentoring and, of course, education. Such a fertile environment for recruitment should not be passively acknowledged, but should be actively embraced as an accessible arena for education about and recruitment to the profession.

Perhaps recruitment efforts for librarianship are currently at a disadvantage when compared to those of other professions. For example, preparatory programs for medicine and law are ubiquitous; students enter these courses of study after years of planning, dreaming and proclaiming that they are going to be doctors or lawyers when they grow up. Pre-med or pre-law students know before entering college what their chosen professions are like (accurate portrayals are omnipotent in the media), and the what the educational and professional requirements are to attain their career goals. Likewise, students who aspire to be teachers are aware of the nature of the field

of education and the potential to fit this professional role; after all, they've had close contact with teachers throughout their entire school-dominated lives.

In reality, librarianship is not unlike education. As the academic library's emphasis in recent years has been shifted to developing standards and instruction programs that address information literacy, librarians in public services are increasingly taking on teaching roles. How many education-majoring students are aware of the teaching role of the librarian and the important responsibility of imparting information literacy skills to students? Would this knowledge change any students' minds with regard to chosen career paths? Banfield reminds us that we must reach out to students interested in related career paths, "Those who lean toward an education profession should be told about both school libraries and the extensive instruction programs in college and university libraries [...] others might hear about administrative and management positions that require a library background" (292-3). She contends that the goal is to communicate that the profession is much more than circulating and shelving books.

Why is there such a drastic lack of knowledge about librarianship? Surely students encounter a myriad of school and public librarians during childhood years – so why the gap in understanding? Perhaps students don't know what librarians do because we don't tell them. Understanding how to use the library is a complicated process; arguably one that is never fully completed or comprehended by the majority of its users. Through unenlightened eyes, the library is a mysterious and elusive space where the books are organized and categorized (apparently magically) on shelves (in some methodical system) and librarians are the ones who know how to find these books (or maybe they just check them out). In their confusion, patrons are ultimately narrowly focused on addressing their immediate information needs. There is little time or effort spent on explaining

what librarians do to create a useable library space and effective library services, and exactly how they accomplish this feat.

We know from the literature and from anecdotal evidence that it is highly uncommon for a college graduate to proceed directly to library school. This delayed entry essentially most likely exists due to the lack of accurate and comprehensive education about librarianship. It has been and should be argued that this education must begin at an early age and be perpetuated and updated throughout a students' school career. "Librarians should work with high school guidance counselors and college placement centers in order to reinforce librarianship as a career opportunity" (Banfield 292).

Education and direct or indirect recruitment can be effective at any age level, but should be refined and thoroughly implemented at the college level.

Student workers as a viable subset of the undergraduate population

When faced with the task of identifying specific students to recruit on a college campus, student workers in academic libraries emerge as an obvious, likely segment to pursue. As evidenced in the current study, library-related factors motivate these students to seek work at the library; they deliberately choose to work in the library. As they gain experience working with the collection, circulation system, staff, and electronic resources, they become accustomed to the environment and mission of the library and its staff.

It cannot be assumed, however, that the experience alone of working in an academic library as a student provides an adequate understanding of libraries and librarianship. That is, the clerical or task-oriented nature of the work that students are typically engaged in, coupled with the limited

interaction they have with professional library staff, does not provide students with knowledge of the essential responsibilities that are critical to understanding the scope of the profession.

For example, a student working at the public service desk will usually refer any reference questions to the librarian on shift. The student worker thus has vague knowledge that assisting a patron with reference question is beyond the scope of his or her job, and that a reference librarian has the skills to help with research or navigating the collection. However, it is atypical and unexpected that a student worker would proceed to observe a reference interview and the resulting searching/instruction session that transpires between the librarian and the patron. Likewise, beyond circulating and shelving library materials, student workers have been shown in this study to have only a limited understanding that librarians order the books somehow. Wouldn't students benefit from knowing that this process entails working within specific budgets, reviewing subject periodicals and publisher catalogs, reading reviews, communicating with faculty, and analyzing the library's collection for coverage? Perhaps the comprehensive awareness of details such as those involved in reference and collection development might influence the perception two participants had, that librarianship is "not intellectually stimulating."

Strategies for implementation

How do librarians approach recruitment of student workers to the profession? It should be initially noted that the author does not suggest that student workers in academic libraries should be inflicted with heavy persuasive recruiting. This would be neither appropriate nor effective. Rather, librarians should be aware that each student worker has different interests, skills and goals,

and that there may be a handful of students who would be well suited for and interested in librarianship.

In the current study, there was one student who specifically chose to apply for a job at Lilly Library to learn more about librarianship. A few more indicated that they would consider librarianship as a career for themselves. What matters is not that these students were clearly in the minority of this population, but that student workers with interest in librarianship exist. However, without awareness of who these students are, a tremendous opportunity is missed.

What does recruiting look like in practice? As mentioned before, it would not be advantageous for anyone if librarians engaged in aggressive recruitment strategies (not to mention highly uncharacteristic). Rather, recruitment activities can begin with establishing connections between student workers and library staff. Of the fifteen students in the current study, eleven students indicated definite or potential interest in learning what a librarian does every day.

Possible introduction and education activities may include:

- Informal visits between individual students or small groups and a librarian throughout the first part of the semester to discuss the librarian's professional responsibilities
- An organized introduction session involving the new student workers for the semester and a group of librarians who give brief descriptions of what they do on a daily basis, and what they are responsible for at the library
- Planning several opportunities for student workers to "Lunch with a Librarian" where similar informational discussions could occur

- Creating a scavenger hunt type activity where students are to use the information on the library staff pages to match up names and pictures, or names and bits of information about staff members' professional backgrounds

Further along in the semester, when student workers feel more oriented to their duties and the staff, they could be given the option to be assigned a librarian mentor. Regardless of the students' interest in pursuing a library-related career, a mentor could be available to serve the role of a professional contact, coach or resource. If a student was interested in either learning more about the educational path to librarianship, job shadowing, finding resources about the different types of librarianship, or making contacts with school, public or special librarians, the librarian mentor would be able to offer advice and/or information. Four students out of fifteen in the current study noted that they would possibly be interested in having a mentor assigned to them.

Seven student workers from the current study indicated interest in a thorough library orientation. Since the tasks they are assigned are usually clerical and narrow in scope, students rarely get a glimpse of the library operation in its entirety. To fill these gaps, librarians could arrange library orientations tours that go "behind the scenes" and beyond the library building they work in (if a branch library). Student workers would be exposed to the various technical and public service librarians that exist in the realms of reference, collection development, acquisitions, cataloging, administration and inter-library loan. Additionally, visits could be arranged to campus libraries of law, business, music, art, rare books, special collections, archives areas, and divinity. Not only would these tours allow students workers to realize the multi-faceted expanse of a college library system, they would also offer an opportunity for those interested in librarianship to explore the different types of librarianship and make contacts with other librarian-mentors.

Education and mentoring programs have been successfully implemented in a variety of libraries; one excellent model is the Undergraduate Student Internship Program (USIP) at University of California, San Diego. In 1989, the newly formed program invited minority undergraduate student library employees to participate in twice-weekly hourly meetings designed to provide an in-depth look at the field of librarianship in general and academic librarianship in particular.

Students visited various library departments, attended presentations by librarians who discussed what brought them to the field, and took field trips to other local libraries. Five years after the program's inception 26 students had completed USIP. Six of the students had received MLS degrees and were practicing librarians; additionally, two were library science students and six were in the process of applying to library schools. "Virtually all the students who have participated in USIP have commented that without the program [...] they almost certainly never would have considered a career in librarianship, much less pursued it actively" (Wheeler and Hanson 143-4).

Additional positive effects of education and mentoring

Education and mentoring are important on many different levels. Not only are these activities essential and expected for student workers who may be interested in librarianship; but as working in the library is for some students a first part-time job, it is vital that librarians show leadership in this respect. Oltmanns notes "[student workers] do not seem to have a broad understanding of how their duties or departments fit into the library system; they believe that only the task at hand is important" (69). Providing opportunities for library orientations and tours, discussions with librarians and mentoring can help student workers better comprehend their role in the big picture. For example, if a patron asks a reference question or inquires about a library service that the

student is unfamiliar with, the student will be able to refer the patron with confidence to a reference librarian or appropriate subject specialist. This is contrary to the author's observations of how student workers often field reference questions; they pause, and hesitantly glance in the direction of a librarian and mumble "Ummm ... I don't know, maybe he/she knows more."

Offering such opportunities to student workers could alleviate some of the diffidence they often exude, and might consequently empower them to seek out what they are unsure of. Knowledge, coupled with a sense of purpose in context to the larger system can enable students to feel more ownership of their role in the library. Just because these students only work about 10 hours a week doesn't mean they aren't valued or central to the fulfillment of the library's mission. Often, students are the primary public service point between patrons and the library; it is to everyone's best interest to train and mentor them accordingly.

Beyond potential for increased job-related performance, student workers are in a key position to act as a liaison between the library and its patron community. Students, throughout and beyond their college careers, will form relationships and communicate with an endless number of friends, classmates, faculty, advisors, administrators, family members, and co-workers. Equipped with the experience and knowledge that they have gained during their work experience in the library, they have the potential to disseminate information about library services, organization or skills to anyone they encounter. This work experience for them, just like any other life experience, is an addition to their repertoire of life knowledge and understanding. Whether they realize it or not, they will be affected in some way by what they learned (or didn't) while working at the library. It is the duty of librarians to see that the effect is a positive one. Paula Kaufman, former ARL president, praises the crucial nature of mentoring saying, "In today's, and tomorrow's, worlds

mentoring can make the difference between success and failure to lead; it can make the difference between developing people to succeed us successfully or letting the chips fall where they may...for in the end it may be the most powerful tool we have” (5).

Mentoring, as a general practice, has positive outcomes for both protégés and mentors, writes Gail Munde. Examples of benefits for protégés include higher salaries, promotions, overall career satisfaction, and high satisfaction with their organization. Likewise, mentors gain a “renewal of professional purpose, a briefing in new or emerging aspects of a profession, a sense of satisfaction that one has helped to influence the future of the profession, the loyalty and support of the protégé, and recognition for the mentor’s ability to identify and advise promising employees who will contribute to the organization” (172).

Echavarria agrees about the merits of mentoring, and suggests that introducing students to the field of librarianship is easiest with library student workers. “If a librarian shows genuine concern about them personally and gets to know them, the librarian can become a role model...the librarian can help the student ask him/herself the right questions about selecting a graduate school and get information from the [ALA] and other professional organizations” (20). Similarly, Wheeler and Hanson speak favorably of the relationship, “A significant amount of research suggests that personal contact with librarians has been a major determinant in many people’s decisions to pursue careers in the profession. For example, an opportunity for ongoing, one-on-one dialogue with a librarian can make an enormous difference in acquainting undergraduates with the opportunities for fascinating and challenging aspects of our day-to-day work” (143).

Implications for further research

This study was conducted on a small scale in a single branch of a large academic research library. While the findings are relevant and generalizable, they represent a population of student workers from only one library. More research is needed on this subject; similar and more comprehensive surveys need to be conducted in a variety of library settings that employ student workers.

APPENDIX A – SURVEY

1. Year in school : Fr. So. Jr. Sr.
2. How many semesters have you worked at Lilly (including this one)? _____
3. What made you decide to apply for a job at Lilly, as opposed to other employers?

Check all that apply:

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I enjoy books and reading | <input type="checkbox"/> | It was convenient to my residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I enjoy information and technology | <input type="checkbox"/> | It was the only thing available to me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I thought I'd like the library environment | <input type="checkbox"/> | It seemed to be peaceful, easy work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I wanted to learn about librarianship | <input type="checkbox"/> | I could do school work while on the desk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I worked in a library before and liked it | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other : |

From your understanding *without doing additional research* : (Use back of sheet if necessary)

4. What is the education level required to be a librarian?

Undergraduate Graduate PhD. Not Sure

5. Who are the librarians at Lilly? (Circle all who are)

Sara Greta Denise Jasper Lauren Purvis Amy Carson Kelley Dave Lee Carol Yunyi Ken

6. What professional responsibilities do the librarians have at Lilly? What do they do each day? List responsibilities:

7. Would you consider librarianship as a career?

Yes No Maybe

(Optional) Why or why not? _____

8. How you think your experience so far working at Lilly has influenced your answer in no. 7?

9. Would you be interested in ...

Yes No Maybe Learning more about librarianship as a career?

Yes No Maybe A thorough library orientation?

Yes No Maybe Assignment of a librarian mentor?

Yes No Maybe Information about the educational requirements of becoming a librarian?

Yes No Maybe Talking with a librarian about what he or she does every day?

APPENDIX B – LETTER OF CONSENT

February 24, 2003

To: Student workers at Lilly Library
 From: Amy Gresko
 Re: Invitation to participate in a study for my Master's Paper

I know most of you, but to those I have not met, I am one of the two Reference and Instruction Interns at Lilly Library for the 2002-2003 year. I work 20 hrs a week at Lilly while studying as a full time graduate student at UNC Chapel Hill for my degree in Library Science. I am actually in my final semester right now (yay!), and am working on my Master's Paper...which is why I am writing to you.

I am interested in learning more about recruitment to the profession of librarianship, and that is what my paper will be on. I will be conducting a study to learn more about student workers in academic libraries, interest in the profession, and areas for improvement in communication. Therefore, all the Lilly student workers are invited to participate in my study. I hope you will consider filling out the attached survey.

The survey is one page long, and it will probably take you about 15-20 minutes to complete. There are a few things I want to make sure you know about this study:

1. Your privacy will be protected. The survey is anonymous.
2. You can withdraw from the study at any time.
3. The individual responses will not be shared with the staff at Lilly.
4. Your participation will help not only me (and my requirement) but the librarianship profession as a whole! Your candid answers will be greatly appreciated.
5. I would be able to share with you all a summary of the types of responses I receive.

If you have further questions about the survey or my study, you can contact:

Amy Gresko (myself) – gresa@email.unc.edu or Evelyn Daniel (my advisor) – daniel@ils.unc.edu

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant you may contact Dr. Barbara Goldman (UNC Institutional Review Board Chair) – aa-irb-chair@unc.edu or 919-962-7761.

If you decide to participate in this study, please complete and return the survey to my mailbox in the 110 office at Lilly. Do not write your name on it. Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.

** Due Date: Please return completed surveys to me by Tuesday, March 4th **

APPENDIX C -- DATA : PERCEIVED RESPONSIBILITIES OF LIBRARIANS

Reference and user services: assist patrons; interact with patrons; serve as online librarian; deal with patrons' reference questions; help patrons with research; help patrons with questions; make sure patrons' needs are met; answer reference questions; oh yeah, work with patrons to help them utilize library resources; have no idea...they usually help with reference questions and assist students; each acts as an information index for their specialty...for instance, [the art librarian] could direct students with art history questions to the proper resources; um...helping patrons; research assistance; web mastering (14)

Circulation and ILL services: work at desk; for example ... the audio-visual librarian, works mostly with video circulation, while ... the circulation librarian, deals with incoming and outgoing books and videos; all librarians work at the desk sometime; work with some type of circulation; work at desk; maintain circulation records; assess and fix circulation and technical problems; stay current with computer and circulation things; shelve new books and reshelve old books; charge and discharge; retrieve and distribute books for ILL; inter-library requests (12)

Collection Development: review books; make sure materials are available for students and professors; order books; order new books; order books, films etc.; research new book and video acquisitions; research which books to buy; determine acquisition of new books; update library's collection, etc.; I think the librarians order the books the library receives; looking for new stuff to order (11)

Instruction services: teach; teach some classes; give presentations to students and staff about library functions (3)

Supervision and HR: oversee student workers; deal with student assistants; help hire new staff; hire new workers (4)

Collection and building maintenance/repair: take care of video collection and books; maintain books; maintain physical state of books; facilities and stacks maintenance; maintain library services; keep the library maintained and running; manage daily functions (7)

Reserves: handle requests to put movies and books on reserve; reserve materials, video... (2)

Library development and planning: have meetings; constantly innovating policy and appearance for patron convenience; they may also plan fundraising or cultural events for the library; make up schedules (4)

Cataloging: catalog new books; organize and catalogue; cataloging stuff, processing new stuff; catalogue research (4)

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