

AREA LIBRARIAN SURVEY RESULTS

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ARL Library Directors were asked to identify the area librarians in their libraries. 564 librarians were identified by name, of whom 94 were part-time, and 14 vacant positions were identified. The total of 578 area librarians is not all area librarians in the US, since only ARL libraries were surveyed.

Questionnaires were sent to 418 area librarians. Since Harvard University and the Library of Congress sent the ARL director's questionnaire to selected area librarians, we decided not to send them the area librarian's questionnaire. 44%, 187 area librarians, responded to the questionnaires. However, since not all librarians answered every question, the responses may not always total 187 in the report which follows.

The area librarians' questionnaire had 11 content questions, five of which had several parts, as well as space for comments. A large amount of data was collected which can be the subject of sophisticated analysis. The data which I will present today represent a preliminary analysis at a general level. Fine-tuning of the data will be needed before it is published. Much more analysis of the data is possible than can be presented here.

The data collected are rich, complex, and diverse. Categorization was essential for analysis, but categorization masks diversity. For example, the ARL Library Directors identified the following positions which could be classified, at least in part as West European:

French
French/Italian
French/Italian/British Area/Fine Arts
Germanic Studies/Germanic Language
Germanic/Slavic
German/Dutch
German/European/Africa
Hellenic Studies
Iberia/Italy/Greece
Italian/Portuguese
Romance Studies
Spanish
Spanish/Portuguese
Spanish/Portuguese/Latin American
Spain/Portugal/Pacific/Latin America/Africa
West Europe

These job titles include positions with both a language and an area focus. The job titles do not make distinctions between collection development and cataloging positions, for example. Nor do they indicate anything about the larger library context or institutional environment in which the positions exist. So this example serves as a warning that nothing is as simple and straightforward as it appears in the data summaries which follow.

The geographic areas of the librarians who responded are:

Geographic area	Number of librarians	Geographic area	Number of librarians
African	23	Latin American	26
Asian	5	Middle Eastern/Near Eastern	
Canadian	1	including Judaica	20
Chinese	8	Pacific	3
East Asian	20	Slavic/East European	30
Icelandic	1	South Asian	5
International	8	Southeast Asian	9
Japanese	4	West European	15
Korean	2		

For Icelandic the total universe responded. Pacific and African area librarians are overrepresented relative to the total number, in the latter case, probably because of my encouragement of colleagues to respond.

Area librarians were invited to attend this conference to represent all of these geographic areas. All are represented here except for the Pacific and Iceland. Area librarians also were invited to the conference to represent different sizes and types of institutions, and the range of characteristics found in replies to the questionnaires.

The percentage of time spent on area studies activities by respondents is:

Percent of time spent	Number of librarians
100%	74
50-99%	75
20-49%	11
less than 20%	21

More than 80% of the librarians spend half-time or more in area librarian activities. Those who spend less than half-time on area librarian activities do some selection of materials.

The area librarians were asked how much time they spend on different library functions. These data can be tabulated in many ways. The averages for each function tabulated below on 161 complete responses provide an overview of the distribution of the functions nationally.

Function	Percent of time spent
Collection development	41.5
Technical services	22.4
Public services	14.2
Administration	9.9
Bibliographic instruction	5.1
Fund raising/grant writing	2.7
Other: teaching	4.2
research	
cooperative projects	
committee service	

It should be noted that technical services activities were primarily cataloging. If teaching, research, cooperative projects, and committee service had been listed on the questionnaire, rather than being written in by respondents under Other, it is possible that different responses would have been given.

Area librarians are a highly educated group. The degrees they hold are:

Degree	Number of librarians
B.A./B.S.	187
MLS	161
Other MA	131
PhD	65

It is notable that over 70% hold a subject masters in addition to the MLS, and nearly 35% hold a doctorate. The importance of education was reinforced by write-in comments on the importance of area studies knowledge and the need to keep up with it.

It also is notable that history was the most frequent major for all degrees. At the bachelors level librarians majored in 41 fields. The most common majors are:

Major	Number of librarians	Major	Number of librarians
History	40	German	12
English	15	Chinese	8
Russian	14	French	8

At the masters level librarians majored in 46 fields. This may represent more narrow specialization than at the bachelors level or it may be an artifact of how the question was answered. The most common majors at the masters level were history 24 and Latin American

Studies 10. At the doctoral level librarians majored in 20 fields, with history being most common 21, followed by library science 8.

All of the geographic areas in which area librarians work, except Canadian Studies, require expertise in several foreign languages. The range of languages a librarian needs to know varies considerably among geographic areas. Area librarians reported on their language expertise at 3 levels: fluency, reading knowledge, and bibliographic knowledge. Collectively the librarians know 95 languages, which are listed in Appendix III A. As impressive as this number may sound, the linguistic universe with which area librarians deal is vast. At Indiana University, for example, the collection includes materials in over 700 African languages. Despite the large number of languages that area librarians know, language training was one of the three most important areas for professional development identified by area librarians.

Over 63%, 119 area librarians have held positions in addition to that of area librarian. The majority of these positions have been in academic libraries, in order of frequency in: collection development, administration, public services, technical services, and documents. Only a few librarians have worked in other libraries including public, school, and special libraries, archives, a USIS library, and as an ALA book fellow.

Over 37%, 70 area librarians have held academic positions either before becoming an area librarian or concurrently with being an area librarian. The overwhelming majority of these positions have been in colleges and universities teaching, in order of frequency: subjects, foreign languages, and librarianship. Only a few area librarians have held positions as a research assistant/fellow, editor, grants program officer, and area program director.

Nearly one third of the area librarians have worked in libraries outside the US; 61 reported having overseas experience, 125 reported having no overseas experience. The 61 librarians have held 71 positions overseas, since some librarians have held more than one position. A few of the librarians worked in a library overseas before coming to the US, but for most librarians overseas experience was temporary. The 61 librarians have worked in 43 countries: 10 worked in the UK/England, 4 in Germany, and 3 each in India, Iran, Israel, Japan, and Taiwan. (See Appendix III B for a complete list of where librarians have worked.) The length of time that area librarians have spent overseas ranged from 3 weeks to 20 years:

Length of time worked	Number of librarians
less than 1 year (3 weeks to 10 months)	18
1 to 5 years (2 years most common)	40
6 to 10 years	9
more than 10 years (13 to 20 years)	4

Although not all ARL libraries are at institutions which also have a library school, 63 librarians reported that they have been mentors to library science students who have become area librarians. One hundred twenty one librarians reported that they had not served as mentors to library science students. Write-in comments reinforce the importance of on-the-job experience in the education of area librarians.

Area librarians are active professionally in library organizations and their committees. Collectively, the area librarians belong to more than 80 library organizations and committees and more than 80 area studies organizations and their committees. (See Appendix III C for a complete list.) Most of the organizations to which area librarians belong are US based, but some of them are foreign organizations.

Seventy-nine librarians reported being members of the American Library Association, but analysis of individual responses also indicates membership in many ALA subgroups such as the Black Caucus and CCAAM (Committee on Cataloging Asian and African Materials). While 19 librarians reported being members of ACRL, 33 librarians reported being members of 4 ACRL sections: the Anthropology and Sociology Section, Slavic and East European Section, West European Section, and Women's Section.

The area studies associations in which more than 20 librarians reported membership are the Association for Asian Studies 48, American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies 26, and Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials 26. On the other hand, there were a large number of area studies associations to which only a few librarians belong such as the American Oriental Society, German Studies Association, and Slovene Studies Society.

Clearly the descriptive data on professional membership are far more important than the quantitative data, since they show the wide range of associations to which area librarians belong, as well as multiple memberships by individual librarians. Area librarians maintain wide and diverse professional networks that provide support for their work.

The future of area librarianship is related in part to the continuing service of area librarians and their replacement upon retirement. The questions area librarians were asked complement those the ARL directors were asked about recruitment of area librarians. The area librarians reported years of services as follows:

Years of service	Number of librarians
Less than 1 year	2
1 to 5 years	40
6 to 10 years	42
11 to 15 years	23
16 to 20 years	21
more than 20 years	48

The area librarians also reported the number of years they plan to continue serving as area librarians as follows:

Years of service	Number of librarians
Less than 1 year	2
1 to 5 years	23
6 to 10 years	24
Over 10 years	76
Not sure	51

One of the most significant findings regarding expectation for continued service as area librarians is that 27% were uncertain about the length of continued service. The reasons given were uncertainty about the future of area studies in general and about area librarian positions as they are currently constituted.

In the last five years, 106 librarians attended more than 30 different conferences where the future of area librarianship was discussed. The conferences with the largest attendance, each attended by 22 librarians, were the Association for Asian Studies, Committee on East Asian Libraries and Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials. Most of the conferences were library conferences, a few were area studies conferences, and one was the US Department of Education Title VI Area Center Directors' annual meeting which provided the stimulation for our future of area librarianship project (See Appendix III D for the list of conferences).

The areas of greatest need for professional development identified by area librarians are similar to those expressed by ARL library directors and area center directors. These needs are:

Professional development need	Number of librarians
Electronic resources	132
Language expertise	38
Grant writing/fund raising	26

The area of professional development in electronic resources covers a range of activities. Most librarians expressed a general interest in learning about new technologies or in learning about the Internet, World Wide Web and CD-ROMS, or in acquiring computer skills. Often this was coupled with a statement about change being frequent and there being more to do, but insufficient time to learn about new resources and acquire new computer skills. Other people expressed an interest in learning about electronic resources about specific geographic areas, or located in specific countries outside the US, or about specific types of resources, such as government publications. Others wanted to learn specific computer skills, for example, to develop a Web home page, develop user friendly systems for patrons, improve technical services in area studies, and improve job performance. (See Appendix III E for other professional development needs.)

In their comments on professional development needs librarians also raised some broader issues about electronic resources including the development of quality control of electronic resources in area studies, the impact of the electronic environment on cooperative collection development, and the role of area librarians in the new electronic environment.

This has been a quick overview of responses to the area librarians' questionnaire at a high level of generalization. From our discussions during the next two days I assume that we will receive guidance regarding what further analysis of the questionnaires would be useful for the action plan that we develop, and which data will be useful for us to refine, publish, and distribute to a wider audience. (Appendix III F includes additional comments about the future of area librarianship taken from the questionnaires which were not formally presented at the Conference.)