

of society. But that argument just cannot get off the ground unless we have some way of distinguishing new "stages" from new "kinds." But we do not appear to have any agreed ways of doing that, and so two commentators can describe the same social situation as enormously different from the past but only a new stage or, alternatively, as the beginnings of a new kind. The thing to do might be to put a moratorium on this particular argument and tell the parties to come back when they have proposals about how best to distinguish stages from kinds, and why we should care. On reflection, one wonders why information professionals should care, unless they can be shown reason for thinking the difference between stage and kind is a big deal and one that makes a difference to them.—Patrick Wilson, *University of California, Berkeley*.

Wilder, Stanley J. *The Age Demographics of Academic Librarians: A Profession Apart*. Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, 1995. 88p. \$30.00. (ISBN 0-918006-77-5.)

Authored by Stanley J. Wilder, assistant dean for technical and financial services at Louisiana State University Libraries, the purpose of the report is to: (1) compare the age demographics of academic librarians to the age demographics of members of comparable professions, (2) examine the dramatic increase in age of librarians between 1990 and 1994, and (3) project the retirement rates of academic librarians over the next twenty-five years. Additionally, the author wanted to explore the possible explanations for, and implications of, his discovery that academic librarians tend to be older than their counterparts in comparable professions.

If you are like me, you are probably initially wondering why this information is important and what the implications of an older workforce for the profession might be. Wilder examined librarian age differences for different job categories;

among minority group members, library administrators, and librarians working different regions; and in public and private institutions. He suggests that the age demographics information will have implications for workforce planning, recruitment, automation, and outsourcing.

Wilder relies primarily on data obtained from the Association of Research Libraries' (ARL) salary surveys for 1990 and 1994, and ARL statistics from 1963-91 and 1992-94; indeed, the subtitle of the report is *A Report Based on Data from the ARL Annual Salary Survey*. However, the appendices reveal that he also analyzed data obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS) and from the Association of Library and Information Science Education (ALISE). The author makes good use of the ARL statistics by conducting a secondary analysis of the data and by supplementing the analyses with additional material from ALISE and CPS.

The first purpose of Wilder's research was to examine the age of librarians as compared to members of comparable professions. The U.S. government-defined, comparable professions are derived from the *Standard Occupational Classification Manual*. This professional specialty group includes librarians, physicians, professors, teachers, lawyers, and social workers, among more than 100 other professions. The author found that librarians tended to be older than members of these other professions. There was an underrepresentation of young people and an overrepresentation of librarians in the 45-49 age group. Wilder states that during the 1960s there was a dramatic increase in the number of students attending higher education institutions. This increased population required an increase in staff at colleges and universities, including more academic librarians. Of lesser consequence is the banishment of a mandatory retirement age for college faculty. Academic librarians with faculty status also are exempt from mandatory retirement.

Another purpose of the report was to determine why there was a dramatic shift in the age demographics in the ARL statistics between 1990 and 1994. Wilder concedes that there are weaknesses in relying on figures from only two sets of data (the 1990 and 1994 ARL statistics) to measure shifts in age distribution; however, he strengthens his argument by supplementing these statistics with data from the other sources mentioned.

The report suggests that librarianship does not attract as many young people as do comparable professions. Data obtained from ALISE about the age of students enrolled in library science programs bolster this conclusion. Students in library schools tend to be older than students in comparable professional programs, such as social work and law. For many, librarianship is a second career entered during midlife. However, most students entering professional schools in preparation for a career in the comparable professions enter during their twen-

ties after completing their bachelor's degree. Library schools also are more attractive to older students because most schools have shorter training periods and are less expensive.

Wilder used the data to calculate retirement projections for the profession. He predicts that a large portion of the profession will retire over the next twenty-five years and expresses concerns about library schools' and academic libraries' ability to replace them. One consequence of trying to replace the retirees with younger librarians, according to Wilder, is the pressure to increase salaries. But he does not provide either evidence or an explanation for why, or how, he reached this conclusion.

Each chapter begins with a preview of the topic and a brief discussion of the findings. Wilder uses a large number of graphics to illustrate the information he is trying to convey in the text. He includes thirty figures and fourteen tables in the brief (sixty-page) report. Although this may seem excessive, the graphics demonstrate his findings nicely, and they are easy to read and interpret.

This report concludes with twenty-seven pages of appendices that explain in greater detail the data sources, how the author calculated projections, and the methodology he utilized. The appendices also contain a bibliography, copies of the ARL survey and the ARL salary survey, and a list of ARL libraries. The list of cited references is particularly relevant and provides a solid foundation for examining the data in this report.

I would recommend this book to library school personnel who are responsible for recruiting new members into the profession and to academic library administrators responsible for hiring staff. As this report makes evident, there is a need to be concerned about the aging of the profession and the implications of this aging population, nearing retirement, on the vitality of the profession.—*Ethelene Whitmire, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.*



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